



PUBLIC FORUM DEBATE

**FEBRUARY 2020 ADVANCED
PUBLIC FORUM BRIEF**



Resolved: The United States should replace means-tested welfare programs with a universal basic income.

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Introduction

The concept of a government provided, base income that is provided to all citizens regardless of their employment dates back to the early days of Greek society when some city states would provide citizens in a community a small salary during times of bad harvest or natural disasters. In the 16th century, the philosopher Sir Thomas More wrote in Utopia of a society where every person would be guaranteed a basic income. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, this philosophy was floated as a means to eliminate the poverty that ran through the city streets of European cities.

It was first brought up as a means of a policy proposal in the United States in 1898 by W.E.B. Dubois. In his Philadelphia experiment, he found that no one race was predisposed to violent acts of crime, but the state of poverty could push a human to the limits of morality in a quest to stay alive and keep their family safe. Thus no one race was inherently violent, but all races were predisposed to crime when put into a state of poverty. He proposed that in order to eliminate this from human nature and to end poverty, a basic income should be given to all people so that basic needs could be met.

Martin Luther King Jr. would bring up this idea again before his death in 1967. Prior to his death, Dr. King had observed the poverty that had overtaken the large swaths of the Deep South. Hit especially hard were the African American communities. Many of these individuals and families would seek assistance from family, friends, or from the local church. However, in some parts of the south, the need was so great that local support networks were at their breaking point. Dr. King saw poverty as another evil in his quest for racial and social equality for all Americans. His belief stems from the idea that social barriers like race and education made it impossible for most families to provide a decent living wage for their families. By guaranteeing every individual that had reached the age of adulthood a set paycheck a month, basic necessities could be met and any further income could be devoted to bettering your life. His idea was novel and had gained traction not only among African Americans, but other minority groups as well as many individuals that were living in poverty. Before his death, Dr. King had even moved forward on planning an anti-poverty rally that he wanted to march on the capitol in Washington where proposed legislation would be presented to the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate.

After the death of Martin Luther King Jr, the idea of a universal basic income would be swept up by the “Great Society” projects of Lyndon B. Johnson. Here, the proposal was to make the United States a beacon to all those on Earth who wanted a better life. As a direct refutation to Communism and the rising Soviet expanse in Southeast Asia, Johnson wanted to show the world that the United States had the best education, military, social networks, and infrastructure of all. It was out of this we got the modifications to the Voting Rights Act, government health care for the poor, school meal assistance, and other programs. What we

didn't get was a universal basic income. At the time, although tempted to act, congress decided that the cost of the program would be higher than what the nation could bear without dramatically raising taxes. It was also important to note that at this time in American history, taxes were slanted towards the rich. For example, (and yes, I know this is a movie reference, but it shows the system so clearly) in Rocky II, Rocky is asked how much of his thousands he will get to keep after his fight against Apollo. His response was that due to taxes, he would probably see maybe one grand. Furthermore, the government also was ramping up military operations in Vietnam and building an extended nuclear weapons system around the world, and these things all drained the federal budget. The universal basic income would be shelved.

The UBI would emerge again in the 1990s as a counter to the Republican takeover of Congress after the 1994 midterms. Rising to power here was Newt Gingrich as the GOP Speaker of the House. Under his plan, most social services would receive government cuts. As a backlash, opponents in congress and in the private sector began to push the idea that what we needed was a new safety net that could protect every individual regardless of welfare status. This proposal was more as a response rather than a serious policy discussion.

In the new century, the universal basic income would find its way back into serious talks. Most European nations had long ago established a series of guaranteed social programs such as time off, health care, and vacations. In the early 2000's, some European nations took this one step further and began to implement universal incomes. After the dot com bubble of the early 2000's and the housing market crash of 2008, the wealth gap in the United States had grown to an all time high. More and more people were applying for unemployment benefits, Medicare, housing assistance, food assistance, and other means tested welfare programs. Proposals of the early 2010's floated the idea of an amount paid by the government that would be equivalent to minimum wage at 40 hours a week paid to citizens of the US that were at least 18 years of age. The theory was that this would provide people the basic necessities needed so that they could focus on finding adequate work rather than working two or even three jobs just to afford basic necessities. As we move into the later 2010's, Senators like Elisabeth Warren and Chris Murry all proposed ideas that were similar but stopped short of declaring a legislative initiative to pass a universal basic income.

In 2019 with the rise of Presidential candidate Andrew Yang, the universal basic income had a spokesman. His proposal was to implement a VAT (Value Added Tax) to consumption and using the profits from his tax, give every American citizen over between the ages of 18 and 65 a guaranteed \$1000 a month. His plan would coexist with means tested welfare programs as you could opt in to or keep some or all of your benefits if you wanted. At the 2nd Democratic debate, Yang announced that he would be giving a select few people \$1000 a month for a year as a show of how well the program would work.

Yang's rise to stardom and the success of UBI in Europe has gave rise to test programs in the United States. Alaska, for decades, had maintained a UBI from oil revenue. Their program was looked to as a model for others. Places in California, Florida, Alabama, and Washington all

have either implemented a limited UBI or are looking at implementing a UBI. Politically, this measure has limited support on both sides of the spectrum. The Democrats support the measure as it provided a safety net for all Americans while some Republicans support the measure as a means to reduce federal welfare programs in general and simplify the 79 means tested welfare programs into one program.

The concept of welfare has existed for centuries. In English law, the “poor laws” set the legal standards for those in poverty. Most of the laws were meant as a means of incarceration rather than assistance. In the United States, prior to the Great Depression, there were very few national laws that provided assistance if you were living in poverty. However, after the collapse of the stock market and with 25% of the nation being unemployed, the government saw what poverty could do to the average family. With the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt, a new slew of safety nets were created for individuals. Social security and Medicaid were established as line item taxes to support the elderly. Food assistance, government housing, and government medical care were all provided to those that were living on very little. Unemployment was rolled out to hold off job loss in times of hardship. As we move past the post war eras into the 1950’s, programs such as Social Security and Medicaid were renamed “entitlements” as those benefits were guaranteed to the populations through the deduction of taxes. However, programs that relied on you or your family reaching a specific level of poverty were renamed “means tested.” In the 1990’s, these welfare programs came under fire from congress as an unneeded source of government waste. The argument set out by Newt Gingrich was that welfare made people lazy and drained the budget. In the 2000’s, the phrase “War on the Poor” was coined as a string of government acts and regulations and state laws sought to limit who could receive welfare. The government enacted work requirements on welfare programs and some states implemented mandatory drug testing for welfare. As of 2020, many federal welfare programs have some sort of work or job search requirement for eligibility for some or all of the 79 means tested welfare programs.

Framework and Definitions

As a note for this brief. This topic is more like a policy topic than previous resolutions that we have debated this year. As I was writing this brief, I found that arguments that were critical to one side or the other kept popping up and were critical but didn't warrant or weren't long enough to have their own section. Thus, I am treating this topic like I would a policy topic and discussing sub sections under main sections. For instance, under personal economy, you will find a discussion of the stigma of applying for welfare. Also, some sections may have questions for titles rather than headings.

Unlike the previous two Public Forum topics that used variations on the phrase "cost vs benefits," the framework here is not inherently evident. This opens up the creativity of the debaters to a greater extent and allows for the narrative to shape the framing of the impacts more. As the resolution asks us to look at two competing system of public assistance, there is of course ground for a cost benefit analysis if you so choose. Simply weighing the impact level debate on the basis of money saved or people helped is a legitimate framing mechanism on this topic. In this case, it is important to remember that evidence that shows statistics on means tested welfare or UBI is important, but the best evidence is going to be rooted in comparative analysis. What I mean by this is that the best evidence that can be found will explain the economic costs or the number of people helped by one system over the other and it will do so in the same piece of evidence. This type of evidence is better in the judge's eyes because in this case, the criteria for evaluation should be the same. Even in a world where the author or source has a bias, the criteria for evaluation will be the same or with the same slant.

To go deeper into the framework, you can tighten up the impact calculus based on the story of your case. Both sides will be arguing for economics or who can provide the most economic benefits to both the government and the people. Beyond the evidentiary issue over which system truly solves better for economics, the framework should be written to not only defend a system of economics but to undercut the moral arguments that teams on the pro and the con will surely be reading. So if you are the pro team that is arguing an economic benefit to the nation by switching to a UBI, you will need to be able to defend either as a warrant in the constructive or in the rebuttal why economics should come before helping people or the lives of people. The other alternative to not defending this is to go all in on impact turning your opponent's case and arguing that you help more people thus meeting both frameworks. You will need to spend time before round thinking of this and you will be rewarded for your efforts. Based on observations from national level tournaments at Chicago and Las Vegas from the first weekend of the tournament, teams that were better prepared to explain the prioritization of national economics were far more likely to win. Judges stated that they had a tough job weighing the slight decrease in debt or spending to the inevitable negative argument that more people would be hurt in the pro world. Con teams can read economics too and it fairly easy to

do. Although this will be explained more in depth in the argument section of the brief, most plans for the UBI cost a substantial amount, even with the elimination of means tested welfare.

Helping people or some variant on the moral aspect of the debate can be leveraged by both sides. Both sides will likely argue that their side best helps more people. On the pro, it will be through a combination of freedom and an adequate living wage while the neg will be through such things as providing more benefits to people and the overall impact to a greater range of people. Moral arguments are always tricky to weight in most public forum debate rounds as most debaters don't explain well enough why morality ought to be considered when weighed against the competing utilitarian impacts that most other debaters run. Public Forum debaters also tend to not be as versed as other debaters in this regard because it is such a small part of the overall debate. I think that it is time to take a leaf out of the book of our LD friends and clearly define why moral issues ought to be considered before utilitarian issues.

Morality precludes utility- the values of morality come first

Mcnaughton and Rawling 98 [David McNaughton and Piers Rawling are professors of philosophy at Keele University and the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Ratio, "On Defending Deontology", issue 11, p. 48-49 Ebsco]

Nagel effectively accepts the consequentialist view that a system of moral rules can only be defended by showing that their adoption brings about some good that could not otherwise be realized, and then seeks to show that deontology is such a system. The claim is not, of course, that agent-relative reasons rest directly on considerations of value in a manner obviously susceptible to the CVC; rather, the grounding is indirect – the notion is that worlds in which there are agent-relative reasons are better than worlds in which there are not. Nagel argues that an agent relative morality, qua moral system, is intrinsically valuable. Thus we concur with Hooker (1994), then, pace Howard-Snyder (1993), that rule consequentialism is not a 'rubber duck'. Thus rights (the obverse of constraints) have value, and are, therefore, part of the basic structure of moral theory. 'A right is an agent-relative, not an agent-neutral, value', says Nagel (1995, p.88). This is precisely because it is supposed to resist the CVC (one is forbidden to violate a right even to minimize the total number of such violations). So Nagel faces the Scheffler problem: 'How could it be wrong to harm one person to prevent greater harm to others?' How are we to understand the value that rights assign to certain kinds of human inviolability, which makes this consequence morally intelligible?' (p.89, our emphasis – note the presumption inherent in the question). The answer 'focuses on the status conferred on all human beings by the design of a morality which includes agent-relative constraints' (p.89). That status is one of being inviolable (which is not, of course, to say that one will not be violated, but that one may not be violated – even to minimize the total number of such violations). A system of morality that includes inviolability encapsulates a good that its rivals cannot capture. For, 'not only is it an evil for a person to be harmed in certain ways, but for it to be permissible to harm the person in those ways is an additional and independent evil' (p.91). So there is a sense in which we are better off if there are rights (they are a 'kind of generally disseminated intrinsic good' (p.93)). Hence there are rights. In short, we are inviolable because

Morality comes first, the means must justify themselves – utilitarianism justifies the Holocaust.

Anderson, 2004 (Kerby Anderson is the National Director of Probe Ministries International, , Probe Ministries "Utilitarianism:

The Greatest Good for the Greatest Number" <http://www.probe.org/theology-and-philosophy/worldview--philosophy/utilitarianism-the-greatest-good-for-thegreatest-number.html>)

One problem with utilitarianism is that it leads to an "end justifies the means" mentality. If any worthwhile end can justify the means to attain it, a true ethical foundation is lost. But we all know that the end does not justify the means. If that were so, then Hitler could justify the Holocaust because the end was to purify the human race. Stalin could justify his slaughter of millions because he was trying to achieve a communist utopia. The end never justifies the means. The means must justify themselves. A particular act cannot be judged as good simply because it may lead to a good consequence. The means must be judged by some objective and consistent standard of morality. Second, utilitarianism cannot protect the rights of minorities if the goal is the greatest good for the greatest number. Americans in the eighteenth century could justify slavery on the basis that it provided a good consequence for a majority of Americans. Certainly the majority benefited from cheap slave labor even though the lives of black slaves were much worse. A third problem with utilitarianism is predicting the consequences. If morality is based on results, then we would have to have omniscience in order to accurately predict the consequence of any action. But at best we can only guess at the future, and often these educated guesses are wrong. A fourth problem with utilitarianism is that consequences themselves must be judged. When results occur, we must still ask whether they are good or bad results. Utilitarianism provides no objective and consistent foundation to judge results because results are the mechanism used to judge the action itself. inviolability is intrinsically valuable.

The con on this topic allows for a lot of freedom depending on how you chose to write you case. Some cons that were run during the first weekend of the topic were very specific as to what the welfare programs that were going to be eliminated. For reference, there are 79 means tested welfare programs that exist.

Explanation of Welfare Programs in the US

The Balance, US Welfare Programs, the Myths Versus the Facts, <https://www.thebalance.com/welfare-programs-definition-and-list-3305759>

Welfare Funding in the United States

The federal government provides funding for welfare programs, but the states administer the programs. Some states also expand the programs by providing additional funds.

Welfare programs are often debated in Congress. It's not unusual for Congress to consider reducing the funding for a program that already exists.

If Congress reduces funding for a program without also reducing the state's responsibilities for that program, it creates what's known as an unfunded mandate. States and local governments usually end up picking up the rest of the tab for the program, though certain kinds of unfunded mandates can also fall on the private sector. For example, the federal government pays for SNAP benefits, but states pay half of the cost of administering the program.²

Welfare vs. Entitlement

Each welfare program has its own set of eligibility requirements, but they will all include a maximum income requirement. These income requirements are usually set at the state level and determined as a percentage of the federal poverty level. For example, an Illinois resident would not qualify for SNAP benefits if their household makes more than 165% of the federal poverty level.³

Maximum income levels may fluctuate, depending on other circumstances in the household. To stick with the Illinois SNAP example, households that include anyone who's disabled or older than 60 have a higher maximum income level—up to 200% of the federal poverty level.

These maximum income levels are part of what makes welfare programs different from entitlement programs. While you have to prove eligibility to receive welfare program benefits, everyone is entitled to entitlement programs if they have contributed to the program (often through payroll taxes). Even the richest Americans can receive Medicare coverage, for example, once they turn 65.⁴

The four major U.S. entitlement programs are Social Security, Medicare, unemployment insurance, and worker's compensation.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

While many programs are technically welfare programs, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program is the one you may hear referred to simply as "welfare." In March 2019, TANF provided income to more than 2 million Americans.⁵ Most TANF recipients are children. The March 2019 figures include more than 422,000 adults and nearly 1.6 million children.⁶⁷

While those may seem like high numbers, they actually represent just a fraction of American families living in poverty. In 2017, for instance, only 23% of the families with children living in poverty received TANF assistance, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.⁸ The national median monthly assistance for a family of three with TANF benefits in 2018 was \$486 per month.

TANF's predecessor was known as the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). The AFDC was created in 1935 as part of the Social Security Act, but it later came under scrutiny.

Public perception of welfare, then officially known as the AFDC, soured significantly in the '70s. In 1976, President Ronald Reagan's campaign highlighted a case of welfare fraud and popularized the concept of a "welfare queen."⁹ He pushed for welfare reforms and warned of how welfare created a cycle of poverty.¹⁰ In 1996, President Bill Clinton created TANF as a replacement for AFDC, officially ending the original welfare system.¹¹

Medicaid and the Child's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

In October 2019, Medicaid helped pay for the health care of more than 71 million low-income adults and children.¹²

Children have a specialized form of Medicaid called the Child's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). It covers hospital care, medical supplies, tests, and preventive care, such as eye exams, dental care, and regular check-ups.

Medicaid pays for a significant portion of U.S. births.¹³ Not every state reports this data, but among the states that do, the rate of Medicaid-funded births commonly fall between 30% and 50%. The highest figure came from New Mexico, which reported that 71% of births in 2018 were funded by Medicaid. The lowest figure came from New Hampshire—just 26%.

The Affordable Care Act increased Medicaid coverage by 26%.¹⁴ It raised the maximum income level and allowed single adults to qualify.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP is more commonly known as food stamps. The food voucher system helped more than 34 million people buy food in 2019 (North Carolina did not report data in time to be included in this figure).¹⁵

The average individual received \$129.97 a month. The total federal cost for SNAP was \$58.3 billion.

The average individual received \$129.97 a month from SNAP in 2019. The total federal cost for the program was \$58.3 billion.

In addition to SNAP, the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides food, vouchers, education, and referrals to help feed pregnant women and children up to age six. In 2018, roughly 6.87 million people received WIC benefits.¹⁶ Of those, more than 76% were children or infants.

Another food-based welfare program is known as the Child Nutrition Program. In 2018, this program provided free or reduced-cost lunches to 29.7 million children at a cost of \$13.8 billion to the federal government.¹⁷

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

Supplemental Security Income provides extra cash to help low-income adults and children who live with disabilities.¹⁸ As of November 2019, more than 8.07 million people received an average of \$567.39 per month.¹⁹ Of those, more than 6.9 million were blind or disabled.²⁰

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

The Earned Income Tax Credit is a tax credit for low-income families. For tax year 2018, a family of four (in which couples are married and filing jointly) must have earned less than \$55,884 a year to qualify.²¹ More than 22 million individuals and families received EITC in 2018.²² The average credit for a family with children was worth \$3,191. The credits lifted approximately 5.6 million people out of poverty in 2018, 3 million of whom were children.

Housing Assistance

Housing assistance often takes the form of rental assistance.²³ It includes 1.2 million units of public housing, privately owned subsidized housing units, and a voucher program that allows low-income renters to find their own unit.²⁴ The Housing Choice Voucher Program aims to ensure that low-income families spend no more than 30% of their income on rent.²⁵ Local agencies administer it to 2.2 million families.²⁶

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program is a similar welfare program that provides energy assistance and weatherization programs. Congress allocated \$3.32 billion in block grants to the states for this program to be implemented in 2020.²⁷

Myths About Welfare Programs

A 2018 Rasmussen Reports survey found that 61% of Americans believe that too many people are dependent on government financial aid.²⁸ What many of these respondents may not realize is that they themselves benefit from federal aid given to their state governments.

There are many misconceptions about who exactly benefits from federal aid. In 2012, for instance, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney said that 47% of the population would vote Democrat no matter what.²⁹ He claimed this 47% of Americans vote Democrat because they "are dependent upon government" and don't want to see a reduction in welfare programs.

However—digging into the facts on who receives federal benefits and how they vote—one can quickly dispell this myth. In an interview with Vox, political scientist Suzanne Mettler said her research shows that welfare and food stamp recipients are far less likely to vote than others.³⁰ They struggle so much to make ends meet, they don't have the extra time to read up on political issues and go to the polls. Furthermore, research by the Tax Foundation and Gallup polls shows that many of the states that rely the most on federal benefits vote Republican.³¹

Many of the voters who decry welfare programs may not be aware of how dependent they are on government programs. For example, they may not be aware that the deduction for home mortgage interest is a form of government benefit. It's easier to only consider visible federal benefits, such as welfare checks or food stamps. As a result, some voters don't think the government has done much for them personally.

Another myth accuses undocumented immigrants of coming to the U.S. to take advantage of welfare programs. However, most welfare programs only benefit legal immigrants. Even among legal immigrants, they must have a 10-year work history or be a member of the military before they are eligible to receive TANF, for instance.³² Other welfare programs have similar restrictions.

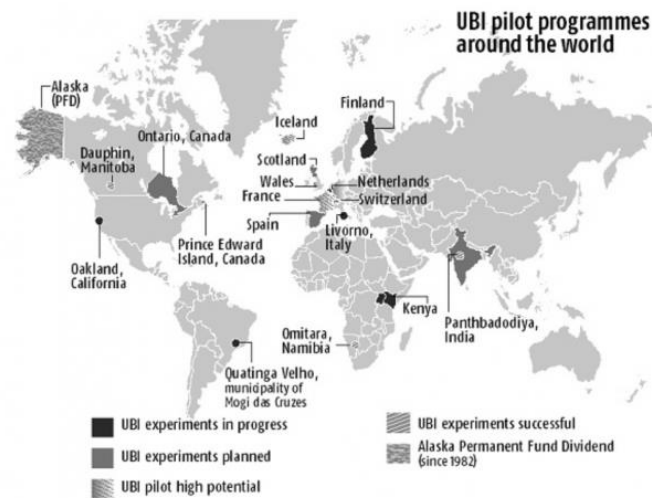
The only federal welfare program that benefits undocumented immigrants is Medicaid—and even then, the benefits are only allowed in cases of emergency. Kaiser Health News estimates that roughly \$2 billion goes to hospitals every year to reimburse them for emergency room costs that are largely associated with undocumented immigrants.³³

With that being stated, cons were picking the two or three programs that they enjoyed talking about the most and created a framework around those. One team that was debating at Las Vegas ran a case based on programs for women like Planned Parenthood, job training, and college assistance programs. They ran as their framework “helping women in society.” Cases that people have been brewing online include helping children and using programs like school meals and after school programs or helping minorities through job training and language training. Even the pro teams can get in on the specific case creation. A team at Evanston ran on the pro a women’s rights framework and argued that at UBI helped women escape from domestic abuse.

At the end of the day, unless you are going broad strokes with your case, your framework will be shaped around the choice of case ideas you use. I would advise against doing the “buffet” style of case writing and picking the biggest welfare programs that exist and throwing them into a case. Find a theme and use that theme to write the framework.

Definitions

Universal Basic Income- Under this topic, we are not debating whether Andrew Yang should be elected president. Do not let this debate turn into a Yang 2020 campaign rally. You are debating whether we should provide people with a guaranteed government income. What you can do, however, is to use the justifications of a political proposal to justify your advantages. Now, I know what some of you are thinking. Any longtime reader of the NSDA's briefs knows that I am against plan texts in public forum debate. I still am here. But in getting creative, if you can justify that Yang's plan or Murry's plan or the Finland plan would be the most middle of the road or that the collective average of the UBI plans that exist or the most common UBI's that exist use "X" plan, then that is what we must use to determine payout, eligibility, and other criteria, I believe that you skirt the whole debate around what is considered a plan text. In this case, this map is current as of January 2020.



<https://publicpolicy.wharton.upenn.edu/live/news/3136-a-closer-look-at-universal-basic-income>

Means Tested Welfare- The important point here is “means tested”. If you refer back to the card that was listed earlier in this brief, to be a means tested program means that you must have an eligibility requirement to gain entrance. In most cases, this involves having a certain income of a low level. There is an important distinction to remember that this is not the same as general welfare which does exist, nor does it refer to entitlement programs such as social security and Medicaid. Do not conflate the programs and do not let your opponents do so either. Very few people would ever say that getting rid of Grandma's social security is good, thankfully that isn't the topic. Again, as stated above, there are 79 programs that fall into this category.

Replace- Based on the dictionary, to replace means to remove and swap. Cut and simple, right... Debate is never that easy. If you use the definition of UBI as a starting point to justify a policy proposal of a specific person, you can get creative with the definition of “replace” as well. Under Yuan and Murry’s proposal, they speak of replacing as allowing people the option to take UBI or keep standard welfare. This could be a major issue in the debate as their definitions are grounded in policy literature and if accepted by the judge as a legitimate definition and proposals for UBI, could allow a pro to blunt the force of negative positions. A smart pro would argue that the UBI might be Yang’s proposal as it is the most current policy option and most widely known in the US. Thus, since we are using his as a framework, his definition of to replace means to be able to opt in or out of. So any arguments the con brings up as to why specific means tested welfare programs are good also apply to the pro since they allow people to keep welfare. Not every judge will buy this, but if phrased right, I believe that the majority will.

Other topic notes

The resolution states “United States” not “United States federal government.” This is significant as more and more welfare programs are shifted to the states through use of block grants. So you shouldn’t let teams try to take cover by arguing that only federal programs are eliminated, it also takes out state programs as well.

There is a difference between welfare, means tested welfare, and entitlement programs. Don’t let teams conflate or confuse these.

This topic is not specific as to whether undocumented immigrants or refugees can apply for UBI. This is where a proposal would be handy.

Economy (National)

No matter how you look at it, the rising federal deficit is a growing concern for all political parties. The debate, however, remains how to curb our growing debt and bring our rising obligations under control. For most Democrats, the answer seems to be to raise taxes on the wealthy or business while the Republicans favor a trickle-down style tax system while cutting social programs. In the year 2020, the amount spent on means tested welfare will be a small part of the federal budget but remains a tempting target for reduction by the Republicans. To counter this cut to social programs that many in the Democratic party not only hold as necessary, but favor an expansion of, they have decided to play the same game as the Republicans. Flipping the script, the Democrats have argued that a means tested welfare programs, when replaced or supplemented by a UBI would lower the federal debt while providing consumers the needed money to buy products and invest in business. This argument has seemed appealing to some in Congress such as the Senators and Representative from Alaska. The Alaskan economy has been bolstered for year by a UBI provided from tax revenue from the oil companies. This guaranteed check a month helps supplement the high cost of goods in mot Alaskan towns and cities (in some parts including Nome, simple things like a jar of peanut butter can cost \$7 or more). Other more libertarian leaning members of congress have also been swayed as one check a month regardless of income cuts out many needless government questions and intervention into what legitimate spending is.

However, this plan is not without its downfalls. According to most estimates, a complete elimination of means tested welfare would only generate about \$300 billion dollars a year, and that is cutting every federal welfare program. If we go on the middle of the road estimate of a guaranteed \$1000 per person between the ages of 18 and 65, the grand total is estimated to be about \$400 billion annually. This still leaves us with a massive hole in spending that would be considered new spending and thus add to the debt. Compound the issue with some plans that keep means tested welfare and the cost rises still. Figures assuming people are allowed to keep means tested welfare in a limited capacity and receive a UBI using the same criteria as before putting the total cost at \$500 billion a year. On the flip side, proponents of the system argue that there are grounds to say that there would be a reduction in federal spending as the system would be simplified and need less human power to distribute checks. Furthermore, they argue that the tax revenue generated by investments and consumer spending would jumpstart the economy and fill in the gaps. Opponents say that this is wishful thinking and that when government has increased revenue, they just find new means to spend it.

The debate over economy is based on perspective. For this debate, you will need to take a directed position that has the math figured out. I have never been an advocate of drawing the judge in numbers, but in this case, simply walking the judge through the “right column, left column” of the budget for a UBI might be very helpful. This debate will be an arms race, with

each side adding on expenditures and cost saving measures in an attempt to one up the other side. To win, keep the flow clear and clean for the judge. Explain in simple terms the argument as if it were a personal budget. Also, don't forget the impact debate. If your overall argument is to stop the rising debt, you need to read impacts as to why the debt is bad. In the year 2020, with the government spending money like crazy, people can forget that someone has to pay the bills.

Investment

The secondary goal of a UBI is that if you give people money, and if the people getting the money are already financially stable, then people have two options, they can save their money in either a savings account (low yield investment) or in a CD or savings bond (higher yield investment) This generates a small amount of revenue for the government, provides repayable loans for the government, and allows the government access to necessary cash to pay our obligations.

The other means of investment is into the stock or bond market. By investing in business, the Republicans get one of their major goals provide for as people turn to business to generate profit. As business makes profit on the investments, investors gain huge returns and the government can collect taxes. Even if the tax rate for business is lower now that it has been in a generation, any increase is welcomed.

The argument against investment is this, if you divide up the population into the people that can afford to invest and those that can't, there are far more people at the bottom of the scale than at the top. These people are likely using the UBI to buy necessities like food, shelter, and stuff for their kids. They aren't investing. The people that can invest likely have already so the overall turnaround and revenue generated would be insignificant in the long run. This is the point you want to play out to the judge. Remind the judge that if they got a UBI each month, would they invest in Wall Street or use it to pay off student loan debt?

Sample Evidence

UBI promotes individual spending. This powers a consumer-based economy

Nikiforos 17 et al. Roosevelt Institute. rooseveltinstitute.org/modeling-macroeconomic-effects-ubi/08.29.17.

How would a massive federal spending program like a universal basic income (UBI) affect the macroeconomy? We use the Levy Institute macroeconometric model to estimate the impact of three versions of such an unconditional cash assistance program over an eight-year time horizon. Overall, we find that the economy can not only withstand large increases in federal spending, but could also grow thanks to the stimulative effects of cash transfers on the economy. We examin[ing] three versions of unconditional cash transfers: \$1,000 a month to all adults, \$500 a month to all adults, and a \$250 a month child allowance. For each of the three versions, we model the macroeconomic effects of these transfers using two different financing plans - increasing the federal debt, or fully funding the increased spending with increased taxes on households - and compare the effects to the Levy model's baseline growth rate forecast. Our findings include the following:

- For all three designs, enacting a UBI and paying for it by increasing the federal debt would grow the economy. Under the smallest spending scenario, \$250 per month for each child, GDP is 0.79% larger than under the baseline forecast after eight years. The model finds that the largest cash program - \$1,000 for all adults annually - expands the economy by 12.56% over the baseline after eight years. After eight years of enactment, the stimulative effects of the program dissipate and GDP growth returns to the baseline forecast, but the level of output remains permanently higher.
- When paying for the policy by increasing taxes on households, the Levy model forecasts no effect on the economy. In effect, it gives to households with one hand what it is takes away with the other.
- However, when the model is adapted to include distributional effects, the economy grows, even in the tax-financed scenarios. This occurs because the distributional model incorporates the idea that an extra dollar in the hands of lower income households leads to higher spending. In other words, the households that pay more in taxes than they receive in cash assistance have a low propensity to consume, and those that receive more in assistance than they pay in taxes have a high propensity to consume. Thus, even when the policy is tax- rather than debt-financed, there is an increase in output, employment, prices, and wages. Levy's Keynesian model incorporates a series of assumptions based on rigorous empirical studies of the micro and macro effects of unconditional cash transfers, taxation and government net spending and borrowing (see Marinescu (2017), Mason (2017), Coibion et al (2017), and Konczal and Steinbaum (2016)). Fundamentally, the larger the size of the UBI, the larger the increase in aggregate demand and thus the larger the resulting economy is. The individual macroeconomic indicators are (qualitatively) what one would predict given an increase in aggregate demand: in addition to the increase in output, employment, labor force participation, prices, and wages all go up as well. Even in a deficit-financed policy, an increase in the government's liabilities is mitigated by the increase in aggregate demand. Specifically, the Levy model assumes that the economy is not currently operating near potential output (Mason 2017) and makes two related microeconomic assumptions: (1) unconditional cash transfers do not reduce household labor supply;

and (2) increasing government revenue by increasing taxes levied on households does not change household behavior. Other macroeconomic models would make different, likely less optimistic forecasts, because they would disagree with these assumptions. Estimating the macroeconomic effects of UBI is a critical component of any policy evaluation, as what would appear to be a zero-sum transfer in static terms (where money is transferred from some households to others) turns out to be positive sum in the macro simulation, thanks to the increase in aggregate demand and therefore in the size of the economy

UBI eliminates poverty

Timothy Roscoe Carter 2014 (Basic Income Earth Network, The One Minute Case for a Basic Income , http://basicincome.org/bien/pdf/montreal2014/BIEN2014_Carter.pdf)

The one minute human rights case for a basic income: Poverty is not a natural tragedy like cancer or earthquakes. Poverty is a human caused tragedy like slavery or government oppression. Slavery is caused by societal recognition of humans as property. Government oppression is caused by governments punishing people for their beliefs or characteristics, and without due process of law. Poverty is caused by property laws that deny some people access to necessities. These types of tragedies can be ended by recognizing that humans have the right not to be subjected to tortuous conditions imposed by other humans. Humans have a right not to live in slavery. Humans have a right to be free of government oppression. And humans have a right not to live in poverty. A basic income is not a strategy for dealing with poverty; it is the elimination of poverty. The campaign for a basic income is a campaign for the abolition of poverty. It is the abolitionist movement of the 21st century.

UBI creates demand for goods and services. This stimulates the economy

Nikiforos 17 et al. Roosevelt Institute. rooseveltinstitute.org/modeling-macroeconomic-effects-ubi/08.29.17.

How would a massive federal spending program like a universal basic income (UBI) affect the macroeconomy? We use the Levy Institute macroeconometric model to estimate the impact of three versions of such an unconditional cash assistance program over an eight-year time horizon. Overall, we find that the economy can not only withstand large increases in federal spending, but could also grow thanks to the stimulative effects of cash transfers on the economy. We examin[ing] three versions of unconditional cash transfers: \$1,000 a month to all adults, \$500 a month to all adults, and a \$250 a month child allowance. For each of the three versions, we model the macroeconomic effects of these transfers using two different financing plans - increasing the federal debt, or fully funding the increased spending with increased taxes on households - and compare the effects to the Levy model's baseline growth rate forecast. Our findings include the following: • For all three designs, enacting a UBI and paying for it by increasing the federal debt would grow the economy. Under the smallest spending scenario, \$250 per month for each child, GDP is 0.79% larger than under the baseline forecast after eight years. The model finds that the largest cash program - \$1,000 for all adults annually - expands the economy by 12.56% over the baseline after eight years. After eight years of enactment, the stimulative effects of the program dissipate and GDP growth returns to the baseline forecast, but the level of output remains permanently higher. • When paying for the policy by increasing taxes on households, the Levy model forecasts no effect on the economy. In effect, it gives to households with one hand what it is takes away with the other. • However, when the model is adapted to include distributional effects, the economy grows, even in the tax-financed scenarios. This occurs because the distributional model incorporates the idea that an extra dollar in the hands of lower in-come households leads to higher spending. In other words, the households that pay more in taxes than they receive in cash assistance have a low propensity to consume, and those that receive more in assistance than they pay in taxes

have a high propensity to consume. Thus, even when the policy is tax- rather than debt-financed, there is an increase in output, employment, prices, and wages. Levy's Keynesian model incorporates a series of assumptions based on rigorous empirical studies of the micro and macro effects of unconditional cash transfers, taxation and government net spending and borrowing (see Marinescu (2017), Mason (2017), Coibion et al (2017), and Konczal and Steinbaum (2016)). Fundamentally, the larger the size of the UBI, the larger the increase in aggregate demand and thus the larger the resulting economy is. The individual macroeconomic indicators are (qualitatively) what one would predict given an increase in aggregate demand: in addition to the increase in output, employment, labor force participation, prices, and wages all go up as well. Even in a deficit-financed policy, an increase in the government's liabilities is mitigated by the increase in aggregate demand. Specifically, the Levy model assumes that the economy is not currently operating near potential output (Mason 2017) and makes two related microeconomic assumptions: (1) unconditional cash transfers do not reduce household labor supply; and (2) increasing government revenue by increasing taxes levied on households does not change household behavior. Other macroeconomic models would make different, likely less optimistic forecasts, because they would disagree with these assumptions. Estimating the macroeconomic effects of UBI is a critical component of any policy evaluation, as what would appear to be a zero-sum transfer in static terms (where money is transferred from some households to others) turns out to be positive sum in the macro simulation, thanks to the increase in aggregate demand and therefore in the size of the economy

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How Do We Pay For It?

In the episode of the West Wing titled “Game On,” Jeb Bartlett challenges Governor Richie to the question, “How are we going to pay for it? Answer me that and I’ll drop out of the race right now.” Bartlett, although being dramatic for the fictional TV audience watching the fictional debate, brought up the immortal question in politics. For every program, tax cut, department, initiative, block grant, or requisition for more post-its, someone must pay for this. In the day and age where our debt is over 21 trillion dollars and two years after Congress passed a sweeping tax overhaul that has yet to significantly raise the economy of the nation, we are stuck at that impasse when it comes to the question of UBI.

For the most part, many would argue that the UBI would be self-funding as the reduction in means tested welfare would be more than enough to pay for the program. Most models and logical thinking put this in the category of “wishful thinking” as even the proponents of such a plan such as Andrew Yang realize this program is going to cost a lot of money. So far, based on the tournaments that have used the topic to date, I have isolated three main methods of funding. More methods exist, but these are the three that you are most likely to see at a tournament.

First, you have the proposal from Andrew Yang of a “Freedom Tax.” What this program amounts to is a value added tax. Although not an economics major, I will try to simplify this the best that I can. The value of a product as it is added from manufacturer to manufacturer is subtracted and the surplus is taxed by the government as a consumption or “value.” So if you build a table, you would have paid the taxes on the value of transitioning the lumber and materials to a table. Then when you sell it to a store what adds stain and wax to the table to make it look better, they added value so the amount they can sell it for now is subtracted from the amount that they bought it for and the difference is taxed at the value rate. This is seen as a tax on business because it happens presales tax before the consumer has a chance to see the final price tag. The goal was to impact business and not the consumer while generating revenue for the government. As of today, the United States is the only developed nation that does not have a VAT and we are one of the few nations in the world that doesn’t have one.

The argument against the VAT is that in 33 of the most developed nations, the US doesn’t have it, while two started with rates under 10% and still maintain that, while 30 started with rates under 10% and have raised them above the starting point. Nations find this easy to do since it is a hidden tax, the consumer never knows the true impact unless they go back and reverse the recipes to find the raw cost and tax added. Furthermore, the tax is sometimes passed on to the consumer. Rarely does business sit on a loss, and in this case, most companies will factor in the tax to the final cost. Since the tax happens before sales tax, it means you pay sales tax on the VAT. This creates a situation of double taxation. Finally, it might all be worth it if the VAT increased revenue. However, in most nations that have a VAT, sending also went up,

eating into the profits from a VAT. However, if a team were able to earmark the money for the UBI, it might be enough to generate the revenue to make the program cost effective.

Second, you have the idea of a carbon tax. A carbon tax is a would be a tax on industry and production. The amount of carbon waste, either Co2 or pollution or through solid waste would be given out as an allowance. If you owned a factory and your allowance for a month was 200 tons of Co2 but you in one month produced 250 tons, you would be taxed on the overage. Other plans would tax the total pollution of a factory without an allowance. This is similar to the fines for cars that don't meet the CAFÉ standards the added bonus of this funding mechanism is that it would reduce our carbon footprint and that could lead to the US actually de facto meeting our Paris Climate minimums. On the other hand, the con would argue that the carbon tax has a negative effect on business. Manufacturing inherently produces carbon and moving to green tech has its cost. Business is limited by the ability to transition and the taxes they suffer are enough to drive them out of business or cut into profits. Another argument is that business would move overseas where there is no carbon tax. In these nations, it is likely that the pollution laws are less strict and thus, they might pollute worse than they would in the United States.

The third argument is that the need for a UBI is driven partly by the transition to automation. As workers are pushed out of the factories and even retail market by automated machines that can do the job faster, more accurately, for almost zero cost, and they don't need breaks or benefits, people are left in a job market that is rapidly transitioning from blue collar to white collar. To aid in the transition, a UBI would provide a cushion for those that need time to find a job or retrain for the new job market. Since they were driven from the market by automation and since business is saving a lot of money by using machines, many have proposed that taxing automation as a fair trade off. In this regard, the backlash and impacts from a tax would be the smallest of the three funding proposals that we have discussed today. However, the tax, unless substantial, would also provide the smallest profit margins for the government.

When debating funding, it will be very important to stick to your guns. A pro team will need to choose carefully their means of funding. Be warned that the carbon tax was a policy topic and a pf topic within the last few years so there are backfiles floating around and teams will have them ready. A value added tax has an up-hill battle to fight as it tends to impact the consumer the most. Automation might be the best mechanism if you can work out the details on how much will be raised and whether it will be adequate to offset the cost of a UBI.

Sample Evidence

A VAT is a tax on the production of goods and taxes the wealth that goes into production not the final product like a sales tax. This allows it to target only the wealthy. The revenue can be used to pay for the UBI. Exemptions can be granted to protect small business and consumers and those on fixed incomes

William G. Gale, 1-30-2020, "How a VAT could tax the rich and pay for universal basic income," Brookings, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/01/30/how-a-vat-could-tax-the-rich-and-pay-for-universal-basic-income/>

The Congressional Budget Office just projected a series of \$1 trillion budget deficits—as far as the eye can see. Narrowing that deficit will require not only spending reductions and economic growth but also new taxes. One solution that I've laid out in a new Hamilton Project paper, "Raising Revenue with a Progressive Value-Added Tax," is a 10 percent Value-Added Tax (VAT) combined with a universal basic income (UBI)—effectively a cash payment to every US household.

The plan would raise substantial net revenue, be very progressive, and be as conducive to economic growth as any other new tax. The VAT would complement, not replace, any new direct taxes on affluent households, such as a wealth tax or capital gains reforms.

A VAT is a national consumption tax—like a retail sales tax but collected in small bits at each stage of production. It raises a lot of revenue without distorting economic choices like saving, investment, or the organizational form of businesses. And it can be easier to administer than retail sales taxes.

An American VAT

The structure of an American VAT should mirror those of the most effective existing VATs around the world. It should be built on a broad consumption base. It should adjust (impose or rebate) taxes at the border so it applies only to goods and services purchased in the US no matter where they are produced. Small businesses should be exempt, though they should be able to choose to join the VAT system. Social Security and means-tested government programs, such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, should be adjusted to reflect the after-VAT price of relevant purchases.

Border adjustments are ubiquitous in VATs around the world and do not constitute tariffs. And almost all VAT countries exempt small businesses (somehow defined). Limiting the VAT to firms with more than \$200,000 in gross receipts would exempt 43 million small businesses.

Finally, the UBI payment would eliminate the burden of the VAT and give additional resources to low- and moderate-income households. My version would set the UBI at the federal poverty line times the VAT rate (10 percent) times two. For example, a family of four would receive about \$5,200 per year. My UBI proposal is similar to, but smaller than, the version proposed by Democratic presidential candidate Andrew Yang.

Effects

A 10 percent VAT would raise about \$2.9 trillion over 10 years, or 1.1 percent of Gross Domestic Product, even after covering the cost of the UBI.

As with any tax, its effects on the economy would depend on how government uses the revenue. But all else equal, it would be better for the economy (that is, less distortionary) than hiking income tax rates.

To avoid disrupting the economy in the short run, the VAT proceeds should be used in the early years to stimulate the economy, and the Fed should accommodate the VAT by letting the consumer price level rise

The Tax Policy Center estimates that the VAT in conjunction with a UBI would be extremely progressive. It would increase after-tax income of the lowest-income 20 percent of households by 17 percent. The tax burden for middle-income people would be unchanged while incomes of the top 1 percent of households would fall by 5.5 percent.

It may seem counter-intuitive, but the VAT functions as a 10 percent tax on existing wealth because future consumption can be financed only with existing wealth or future wages. Unlike a tax imposed on accumulated assets, the VAT's implicit wealth tax is very difficult to avoid or evade and does not require the valuation of assets.

A VAT also could benefit states. While states would not have to conform to the new federal law, doing so could improve the structure of their consumption taxes, which tend to exempt services and necessities and often tax businesses. Canada's provinces provide an example of how national and sub-national VATs can "harmonize."

Politics

One hundred sixty-eight countries have a VAT. But would Congress ever pass one? It may not be so far-fetched. In recent years, such a tax (under other names) has been proposed by leading Republicans such as senators Ted Cruz of Texas and Rand Paul of Kentucky, former House Speaker Paul Ryan, and others.

Many years ago, former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers quipped that a VAT has little political support because liberals think it is regressive and conservatives think it is a money machine. He was right.

But liberals should realize that the VAT can be progressive, especially when combined with the UBI. It would be even more progressive if the revenues financed, say, health care or childcare.

There are benefits for conservatives as well. Despite claims to the contrary, there is little evidence that VATs ever increase overall government spending. And in the US, A VAT could be enacted as part of a broader budget agreement that explicitly slows federal spending growth over time.

Ultimately, the real debate will be about how to use the money generated by the VAT. But if new revenues are an inevitable part of any effort to control the federal budget, a VAT with a UBI could be one of the best policy options.

A VAT would be passed on to the consumer. Negates the benefits of the extra income

Murray N. Rothbard, 04-23-2010, "The Value-Added Tax Is Not the Answer," Mises Institute, <https://mises.org/library/value-added-tax-not-answer>

Defeat in New York

The most heartening example — and one that can only give us all hope for a free America — was in New York City, where every leading politician of both parties, aided and abetted by a heavily financed and demagogic TV campaign, urged the voters to support a transportation bond issue. Yet the bond issue was overwhelmingly defeated — and this lesson for all of our politicians was a sharp and salutary one.

Finally, the property tax, the mainstay of local government as the income tax is at the federal level, is now generally acknowledged to have a devastating effect on the nation's housing. The property tax discourages improvements and investments in housing, has driven countless Americans out of their homes, and has led to spiraling tax abandonments in, for example, New York City, with a resulting deterioration of blighted slum housing.

Government, in short, has reached its tax limit; the people were finally saying an emphatic "No!" to any further rise in their tax burden. What was ever-encroaching government going to do? The nation's economists, most of whom are ever eager to serve as technicians for the expansion of state power, were at hand with an answer, a new rabbit out of the hat to save the day for Big Government.

They pointed out that the income tax and property tax were too evident, too visible, and that so are the generally hated sales tax and excise taxes on specific commodities. But how about a tax that remains totally hidden, that the consumer or average American cannot identify and pinpoint as the object of his wrath? It was this deliciously hidden quality that brought forth the rapt attention of the Nixon administration, the "Value Added Tax" (VAT).

The great individualist Frank Chodorov, once an editor of Human Events, explained clearly the hankering of government for hidden taxation:

It is not the size of the yield, nor the certainty of collection, which gives indirect taxation [read: VAT] preeminence in the state's scheme of appropriation. Its most commendable quality is that of being surreptitious. It is taking, so to speak, while the victim is not looking.

Those who strain themselves to give taxation a moral character are under obligation to explain the state's preoccupation with hiding taxes in the price of goods. (Frank Chodorov, *Out of Step*, Devin-Adair, 1962, p. 220)

The VAT is essentially a national sales tax, levied in proportion to the goods and services produced and sold. But its delightful concealment comes from the fact that the VAT is levied at each step of the way in the production process: on farmer, manufacturer, jobber and wholesaler, and only slightly on the retailer.

The difference is that when a consumer pays a 7 percent sales tax on every purchase, his indignation rises and he points the finger of resentment at the politicians in charge of government; but if the 7 percent tax is hidden and paid by every firm rather than just at retail, the inevitably higher prices will be charged, not to the government where it belongs, but to grasping businessmen and avaricious trade unions.

While consumers, businessmen, and unions all blame each other for inflation like Kilkenny cats, Papa government is able to preserve its lofty moral purity, and to join in denouncing all of these groups for "causing inflation."

It is now easy to see the enthusiasm of the federal government and its economic advisers for the new scheme for a VAT. It allows the government to extract many more funds from the public — to bring about higher prices, lower production, and lower incomes — and yet totally escape the blame, which can easily be loaded on business, unions, or the consumer as the particular administration sees fit.

The VAT is, in short, a looming gigantic swindle upon the American public, and it is therefore vitally important that it not pass. For if it does, the encroaching menace of Big Government will get another, and prolonged, lease on life.

One of the selling points for VAT is that it is supposed only to replace the property tax for its prime task of financing local public schools. Any relief of the onerous burden of the property tax sounds good to many Americans.

A carbon tax is the cheapest and most effective way to curtail carbon emissions

Matthews 12, <http://globalwarmingisreal.com/2012/07/25/a-carbon-tax-is-more-viable-than-cap-and-trade/> /

In July, George Shultz said that his party could eventually support a carbon tax. The former Secretary of State for the Regan administration has called for a carbon tax to reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions and oil consumption. Shultz is the head of the Hoover Institution's Task Force on Energy Policy, which calls for boosting energy efficiency, reducing dependence on oil exports to improve national security, and putting a price on carbon. "We have to have a system where all forms of energy bear their full costs," Shultz said. "For some, their costs are the costs of producing the energy, but many other forms of energy produce side effects, like pollution, that are a cost to society. The producers don't bear that cost, society does. There has to be a way to level the playing field and cause those forms of energy to bear their true costs. That means putting a price on carbon." "We've studied a variety of ways to do that, and to me the most appealing way is a revenue-neutral carbon tax. That is, you distribute[s] all the revenue from the carbon tax in some fashion back to taxpayers, so there is no fiscal drag on the economy. British Columbia has a revenue-neutral carbon tax. They started low and increased the tax over five years to a much higher level, so people could adjust. The revenue is distributed mostly to individuals, so it's popular." According to a new report released in June, the Canadian province of British Columbia

introduced a carbon tax that has successfully reduced fossil fuel consumption to the lowest in Canada with little economic damage. The study titled British Columbia's Carbon Tax Shift, produced by the Ottawa-based think-tank Sustainable Prosperity, offers clear evidence that the tax has helped reduce emissions while producing tangible economic benefits. Economist and Sustainable Prosperity senior director Alex Wood said as a consequence of the carbon tax, "you're starting to see in B.C. a separation between economic growth and fossil fuel use." That "decoupling," he added, would lead to a more "resilient" economy insulated from oil price shocks. "The B.C. model is simple, it's elegant; it's a lot of different things," said Wood. "You reduce taxes on income, on corporate income, and you promise to be revenue neutral and you make sure that happens." Despite controversy, British Columbians are increasingly on board. Wood says the report demonstrates that dire predictions are unfounded and he further claims that B.C.'s carbon tax policy could be easily exported. Reasons to Support a US Carbon Tax

A solid rationale for a carbon tax in the US comes from a recent book titled, The Case for a Carbon Tax, written by Shi-Ling Hsu, a professor at the University of British Columbia. According to Hsu, a carbon tax is the most effective mechanism to combat climate change and motivate the private sector while raising much-needed revenue for governments. As reviewed by the Energy Collective, here are 10 reasons to support a U.S. carbon tax from Hsu's book. It is economically efficient. An accurate disincentive for using carbon-based fuels could mimic the increment of damage — the marginal damage — caused by each ton of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere. "The simple genius of a carbon tax is that it aggregates disparate pieces of information, transmitting a price signal at every stage in which there is fossil fuel usage . . . no data collection is required and no model is required." It avoids creating physical capital that could actually harm the environment — e.g. coal-fired power plants. "The problem with capital is that once we have it, its high cost makes it difficult to dispose of." It doesn't interfere with other regulatory instruments or jurisdictions. "A carbon tax would have the advantage, because of its simplicity, of forming the strongest foundation upon which other policies can stand." Government is better at reducing bad actions than increasing good actions. Taxes work better than subsidies. Incentives for innovation — price effects. It would impact emissions not only from the largest carbon sources such as power plants and industrial facilities but all carbon sources. Incentives for innovation — price breadth. It focuses new products and services no matter how much money can be saved by using less electricity or electricity from a different source, e.g. renewables. It is easy to administer. There are no "offsets" as would be needed with a cap-and-trade program. "Awarding an offset for a project that purports to avoid emissions increases rather than actually reducing them is a tricky proposition." International coordination is doable. "An international accord based on a carbon tax scheme would avoid the unfortunate appearance of China being allocated some cap amount by an external bureaucracy." It "would not represent . . . a binding limit to economic growth." It raises badly needed revenue. There is a lot of money that could be raised from discouraging carbon emissions. However, the less carbon emitted, the lower revenues would be. It avoids the risk of catastrophe. In the long-run, this is the ultimate measure of efficiency from a public welfare perspective.

Carbon tax increases economic growth. Australia proves

Central Coast Business and (AMWU says Carbon Tax is good for jobs on the Coast;
centralcoast.businessinsider.net.au/stories/manufacturing/amwu-says-carbon-tax-is-good-for-jobs-on-the-coast-

The Hunter and Central Coast are well-placed to see growth in manufacturing jobs over the next decade due to the Federal Government's carbon tax package, said the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union. The package, including support for existing emissions-intensive industries and a low emission industry and technology fund, positions manufacturing for a strong future, said AMWU State Secretary Tim Ayres. "Putting a price on carbon and backing it up with support for commercialising low emissions technologies and energy efficiency solutions opens up real opportunities for manufacturing. "The Hunter and Central Coast have a lot to offer: a strong and diverse industrial capability, a highly skilled workforce and a proven track record in innovative, world-class manufacturing. "The Hunter is also the energy capital of Australia, with huge coal, solar, wind and geothermal reserves.

Carbon taxes fail—empirics

Hunt 2013 Carbon Tax Confirmed As an Environmental Failure;
greghunt.com.au/Issues/CarbonTax/CarbonTaxMediaReleases/tabid/129/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/2557/Carbon-Tax-Confirmed-As-An-Environmental-Failure.aspx

The key aim of the Carbon Tax to reduce energy use to drive down emissions has failed, according to a new industry report. A survey by the Australian Industry Group has found that despite business being sluggish by the Carbon Tax the main impact has been to drive down profits rather than greenhouse emissions. The survey confirms that as an environmental measure, the Carbon Tax is a flawed policy. 70 per cent of businesses have not reduced their carbon intensity as a result of the Carbon Tax. Only 6 per cent have been able to pass through the costs, leaving them to absorb the price rises and that has come off the bottom line. Industrial businesses have on average faced a 15 per cent increase in electricity and gas prices as a result of the Carbon Tax, with the overwhelming majority of businesses receiving no compensation. And this will go up further on 1 July this year and again on 1 July next year as the Carbon Tax goes up and up. The sooner the Carbon Tax is scrapped the better for Australian jobs, businesses, the economy and the environment. There is a better way and the Coalition, if elected, will introduce a scheme which will support businesses to reduce emissions and deliver for the environment. Under the Coalition's Direct Action Plan, instead of penalising businesses with a tax which makes them uncompetitive, we will provide incentives for positive environmental change.

A carbon tax hurts the consumer

Mathur and Morris 2012 Distributional effects of a carbon tax in broader US fiscal reform; Climate and Energy Economics Discussion Paper; Brookings

This paper measures the incidence of carbon taxes using both annual income and consumption as a basis for the household burden of the tax. We analyze a \$15 per metric ton tax on CO₂ in the year 2010. We first use economy-wide Input-Output tables from the Bureau of Economic Analysis to assess how the \$15 tax would affect the industrial sector generally and particularly the prices of energy goods and other industrial goods in which these energy goods serve as inputs. We then use this information to calculate the increase in prices of consumer goods as a result of the tax. Once we obtain the price increases in 33 categories of consumer goods, we calculate the burden of the tax on households using consumption data from the Consumer Expenditure Survey.¶ Our results suggest that a carbon tax is regressive when using annual incomes as the base for the incidence measure, but less regressive when using consumption. Our analysis suggests that if policymakers direct about 11 percent of the tax towards the poorest two deciles, for example through greater spending on social safety net programs than would otherwise occur, then those households would on average be no worse off after the carbon tax than they were before. Of course, individual households within those groups might be better or worse off depending on their individual energy consumption patterns and participation in federal spending programs.¶ In the tax swap simulations, we subtract the burden of other taxes that the carbon tax revenue could displace, such as the corporate and personal income taxes, and compute the net effect on households. We analyze revenue-neutral tax shifts under three assumptions about how those other taxes lower households' capital and labor income: all borne by labor, all borne by capital, and a 50/50 split. Although all of the tax swaps lower the overall burden of the carbon tax (as a share of household income) on the poorest two deciles, tax swaps also exacerbate the regressivity of the carbon tax on the high end. This means that the benefit to the highest income households of the reduction in other taxes is greater than their share of the burden of the carbon tax.¶ The degree of variation in the carbon tax incidence across regions (with no offsetting tax decreases) is modest; the maximum difference in the average rate across regions is 0.45 percentage points of income. However, a tax swap is likely to increase the variation in burden across regions. The incidence of a tax swap can vary significantly across regions, and the regional incidence depends importantly on whether the swap reduces labor or capital taxes. This is driven primarily by the uneven distribution of capital incomes across regions.

A tax on automation can pay for UBI

Richard Rubin, 1-8-2020, "The 'Robot Tax' Debate Heats Up," WSJ, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-robot-tax-debate-heats-up-11578495608>

In all likelihood, your co-workers pay taxes. But what happens if your boss replaces them with sophisticated software or dexterous machines—ones that perform the same tasks for less money (at least over the long run) and contribute nothing in payroll taxes?

One seemingly flip answer is starting to gain some attention: Just tax the robots.

Bill Gates has called for a robot tax, and New York Mayor Bill de Blasio detailed a plan for one in his short-lived presidential campaign. If the future means far fewer workers and far more machines, tax revenue could drop and the daily rhythms of steady employment could become erratic.

A robot tax could serve multiple purposes, slowing job-destroying automation while raising revenue to supplement shrinking taxes paid by human workers. It could take a few different forms. Lawmakers could limit or slow down deductions for businesses that replace humans with robots, or they could hit businesses with levies equivalent to the payroll taxes paid by employers and employees.

For the moment, massive job losses from automation and artificial intelligence are a largely theoretical worry. But tax economists and lawyers are thinking through the economic circumstances in which robot taxes might make sense and the tricky legal decisions and definitions needed to implement them.

The threshold question for would-be robot taxers is whether this time is special. Machines have been destroying jobs for hundreds of years—while creating new and different jobs along the way.

Are robots just like spinning wheels, assembly lines and personal computers? If so, there may be little reason to change how we tax. Jobs will leave, new jobs will come and the challenge for policy makers will be managing that transition through worker training and assistance.

Today, reflecting a history of prioritizing investment in technology, the U.S. tax system makes no real distinction between job-stealing robots and other equipment. For tax purposes, the robot is the same as the office printer. Companies can deduct the costs of buying equipment—whether printers or self-driving tractor-trailers—and robots, of course, don't pay taxes themselves.

That differing tax treatment hasn't caused mass unemployment. Just look back a few decades. The advent of PCs and computing power in the 1980s and 1990s boosted productivity and destroyed the jobs of typists and file clerks. But software designers and social-media influencers rose to take their place, and U.S. unemployment today is at a 50-year low.

.If that history repeats, there will be difficult short-term disruptions but little to warrant upending the whole tax system.

In fact, altering the tax system to slow automation or raise revenue from robots could be damaging, placing a new constraint on exactly the innovation that can boost employment and living standards in the long run.

“It’s one of the more harebrained ideas. Just about every aspect of it’s wrong,” says Dean Baker, a progressive economist who says the country should be trying to improve flagging productivity growth, not inhibiting it. “The problem that we’re ostensibly trying to fix isn’t there.”

But what if the next wave of robots is different? What if robots aren’t like laptops or sewing machines or any other technology we’ve ever seen and they replace jobs without creating new ones?

“That’s the bazillion-dollar question,” says Shu-Yi Oei, a Boston College law professor. “Is this the same as the last manufacturing age? Or is it really something new?”

There’s a real risk that the next wave of automation and artificial intelligence will displace workers and not create enough jobs, says Daron Acemoglu, an economist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who co-wrote a recent study that found technology already contributing to slower employment growth.

The Office of Tomorrow

Technology is transforming the nature of work. In the coming decades, the office as we know it will likely disappear. Here’s what might take its place.

Technology is transforming the nature of work. In the coming decades, the office as we know it will likely disappear. Here’s what might take its place.

A 2017 McKinsey Global Institute study estimated that 15% of work globally could be automated by 2030, but that U.S. employment rates likely wouldn’t fall as new jobs are created. A subsequent report found that job losses could be concentrated in rural America and already-distressed regions.

But if robots—or artificial intelligence or automation—create mass unemployment, the tax system would be stressed. Payroll tax revenue could decline because far fewer workers would pay into the system. Corporate tax revenue could fall, too, at least temporarily, as companies get short-term deductions for the capital cost of investing in robots.

“You really need to intervene in a way that encourages job creation,” Mr. Acemoglu says. “Taxing or discouraging innovations that are not very productive at the margin but are displacing labor is certainly an option.”

During his campaign, Mr. de Blasio proposed changes to investment deductions and a form of robot taxation that would require companies to pay five years’ worth of payroll taxes for every job they automate. He would have used that money to create jobs in energy, child care, health care and elsewhere.

“My plan wouldn’t accept a post-work future,” he wrote.

But implementing those ideas or others would require messy legal work—largely to define “robot” or whatever it is that is going to be taxed without inadvertently taxing other equipment or creating a new world of tax avoidance.

“Is this the same as the last manufacturing age? Or is it really something new?”—Shu-Yi Oei, Boston College law professor

“I’m sure I can come up with a robot that isn’t a robot, according to the tax code,” Ms. Oei says.

A better approach might be higher taxes on corporations and investment income broadly, generating money from companies that profit from automation without directly deterring innovation or encouraging activity to move abroad, says Orly Mazur, a law professor at Southern Methodist University who studies the intersection of taxes and technology.

“I just haven’t seen a workable robot tax solution,” she says.

Mr. Acemoglu compares the state of robot taxation today to climate change research and policy 30 or 40 years ago: There’s a known problem, but potential responses aren’t well-defined or thoroughly studied.

That thinking and analysis, he says, is what’s crucial now, so future lawmakers have a thoroughly developed set of options.

“If you told Congress right now [to] pass a law, they couldn’t do it,” Mr. Acemoglu says. “We’re very much asleep at the wheel in terms of worrying, measuring, understanding this issue.”

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Economy (Personal)

It is safe to say that the whole point of switching economic systems is to not only benefit the nation but to help people. As one Southern politician said after being voted out of office in 1996, "If you want to stir up people and unite them, cut their lifeline." In this case, using a framework of political realism, it seems highly unlikely that congress will, at any time, cut the benefits that people receive to any social program by any dramatic means. They may put more barriers for the funds, but a cut in real dollars that amounts to more than a few percent is highly unlikely. Even when both houses were controlled by the Republicans, they did not have the stomach to cut much. Rather, they chose to compromise and raise both social spending as well as military spending. So, if this fact is true, what system will provide more benefits to the people?

To answer this question, it is important to understand how the federal welfare system works. Through the biggest program, TANF, an average family of four receives about \$1000 a month. This might seem like that family would benefit from a UBI as it would nearly double their monthly benefits. However, it is important to look more closely at the benefits that are beyond TANF. SNAP, Housing Assistance, federal student means programs, childcare, energy subsidies, the Earned Income Tax Credit, and other programs that some might not realize are means tested welfare or pay out passively (like after school programs or programs in school for study help or disabilities) are not taken into consideration. Once this is, some estimates put a family of four at a level of \$2500 a month. And some most of the programs are passive in nature and have been a part of the fabric of society for so long, removing their fudding under the pro side would force families to either go without those programs or pay for them out of their UBI. Based on the current numbers, this would either negate the financial benefits to people as they would be paying for social programs rather than spending or it would not even cover the amount they would need as the \$2500 is less than a \$2000 that a family of four would make.

When debating this point, you will need to be up to date on your numbers. If you support elimination of welfare, you had better know what that entails and have a good defense to the argument that welfare provides people with more benefits. The con team will need to argue the difference in UBI to welfare is equivalent to a pay cut and that this cut is X% of the pages of a person in poverty. Your goal should be to pain the pro team as bandwagon on the success of a few outside examples internationally when the American welfare system is actually pretty well set up.

Stigma

Another issue that compounds the issue of welfare is the stigma that comes with the application process. It would seem that in the year 2020, that government functions would have switched to the entirely paperless system. However, this is not the case. The application process for welfare is still largely done using paper copies that must be filled out at a physical welfare office. To some individuals, walking into this building to ask for assistance can have an impact on a person's pride. It is human nature to want to be self-sufficient and self-supporting. When you turn 18 and can move out of your home and go to college and live semi independently, you feel as though you have received a new life. This is true no matter how much you love your parents or how much you love your home. The fact of the matter is that the freedom feels good. I can still remember when I was able to completely become independent. After receiving my first teaching job, I was able to move out of my parent's home. That first month when I paid my rent, utilities, cell phone, and car insurance without their help from a paycheck I made from a job that I had made my procession felt like I was a king. So to an individual that has to look at their financial situation and realize that there is not a way for them to make it without help, and then to go ask for help knowing that with the tangled nest of rules and regulations, they might be turned down, it can have a dramatic psychological effect.

To further this issue is the stigma. I can still remember back when I was young and I could see people at the store that had books of what looked like coupons. They would rip out a few and hand these to the cashier. It seemed that everyone who saw them doing this looked away or tried not to make eye contact. It was only later in life that I learned that those were the 1990s versions of food stamps. Now, SNAP benefits are provided via an electronic debit card, so payment looks no different than someone using a debit card, but the stigma still remains. Very few people are openly saying that they are on government welfare, and when they do, many will use the program name rather than saying the phrase welfare. Even I find it hard to say that I am using the Affordable Care Act Subsidies to pay for health insurance. Rather, I tell people my plan is through the open marketplace. The stigma, the way people look at those on welfare is different from others. Even if you absolutely need help, you must deal with the fact that you might very well have to deal with the looks and comments from people that once were your close friends. The proponents of UBI argue that under this system, since everyone would get a set amount each month regardless of income, race, gender, or social status, the stigma would be erased. It's like the comparison to those that go to schools that have a dress code or uniform. It's hard to make fun of someone for their uniform if you must wear the same thing.

When debating this, you will need to look to the value of personal autonomy and individual self-worth. This is going to be a debate where your framework will need to be specific as to how the judge should weight the arguments as it is hard to inherently put a value on self-worth and then ask the judge to evaluate this when compared to economic growth. For a con team, your best bet is to argue that most welfare programs are so woven into the fabric of our

society that most people are on them and they don't realize it. For instance, not family's quality for the Earned Income Tax Credit. Few people would realize that this is considered a form of means tested welfare. Using this, it might be beneficial to create a situation in case that you know the judge could see themselves in. Appeal to the real emotion of being human.

Sample Evidence

UBI allows workers to find work they want. This promotes motivated workers and better quality of workforces

Tyler Prochazka, 1-29-2020, "Three big misconceptions about Yang's Freedom Dividend,"
<https://basicincome.org/news/2020/01/three-misconceptions-about-yangs-freedom-dividend/>

The problem of laziness is one of the most thoroughly debunked misconceptions about UBI. Among those who closely study cash transfers, many no longer consider labor participation an interesting research question because the results consistently show no effect. Those who have read the relevant research and are still convinced that basic income causes laziness will likely never be persuaded otherwise.

As I reported in 2016, "The Overseas Development Institute just released the largest meta-analysis of cash transfer programs ever, spanning 15 years of data and 165 studies. The main takeaway is that studies show a consistent reduction in poverty measures. Perhaps an even more important conclusion is that most evidence showed an increase in work participation after receiving the basic income."

Many specific examples from across the developmental spectrum corroborate the conclusion that basic income would not meaningfully reduce work. In Finland's basic income experiment, there was no negative effect on work. Iran's generous basic income did not reduce overall work but did cause some young people to substitute their time for more schooling. In Alaska, their partial basic income did not reduce overall work. On the contrary, Alaska's basic income increased part-time work due to the increased demand generated by a basic income.

With a permanent basic income, there is reason to believe that a healthier and more productive labor market will emerge. For example, the Finland experiment showed basic income recipients were happier and more trusting overall. Many polls indicate that individuals would use the basic income to gain additional skills, spend time with family, volunteer, and engage in freelancing.

If the poor are no longer clinging to a job for survival, they can more freely find a job where they can be the most productive. They will also have more bargaining power to demand better working environments.

Most importantly, basic income would allow greater time and mental energy to be focused on the most important job in society: caregiving. Volunteering and caregiving provide enormous economic and societal benefits that are not recorded in GDP because they are typically unpaid.

Basic income gives people the right to say no to exploitation. But the most revolutionary aspect of UBI is that it finally gives everyone the opportunity to yes to their passions.

UBI provides workers a means to negotiate since workers won't be as desperate for jobs to make the bills

Bohmer 17" The Human Right to Not Be Poor: A Proposal for a Radical, Not a Neoliberal Universal Basic Income," counterpunch.org, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/12/01/the-human-right-to-not-be-poor-a-proposal-for-a-radical-not-a-neoliberal-universal-basic-income>

In the United States, wages are largely determined by the bargaining power of workers to improve their wages. Right now the bargaining power has been decreasing with the decline of unions, firms threatening to move offshore, and technical change, and this program while being insufficient would increase the bargaining power of workers because they would have the UBI as a minimum. Let's say you're facing a minimum wage job where you're really treated badly, you would have this UBI as a fall back income. You wouldn't have to take the first job you are offered. You could say you'll only work if working conditions improve or if I get offered a better wage; so it would improve the bargaining power of workers. We need stronger labor union laws to make it easier to organize but this is one part of a strategy of improving the dignity of work and people's wages and working conditions.

UBI increases worker productivity

Scott Santens 3/21/2017 (This is Why Experts Think All People Should Have a Universal Basic Income), <https://futurism.com/why-experts-think-all-people-should-have-universal-basic-income/>)

Simply put, a basic income improves the market for labor by making it optional. The transformation from a coercive market to a free market means that employers must attract employees with better pay and more flexible hours. It also means a more productive work force that potentially obviates the need for market-distorting minimum wage laws. Friction might even be reduced, so that people can move more easily from job to job, or from job to education/retraining to job, or even from job to entrepreneur, all thanks to more individual liquidity and the elimination of counter-productive bureaucracy and conditions. Perhaps best of all, the automation of low-demand jobs becomes further incentivized through the rising of wages. The work that people refuse to do for less than a machine would cost to do it becomes a job for machines. And thanks to those replaced workers having a basic income, they aren't just left standing in the cold in the job markets ongoing game of musical chairs. They are instead better enabled to find new work, paid or unpaid, full-time or part-time, that works best for them. 1

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Poverty Reduction

“There is no reason that a person, working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, in the richest country in the world should be in poverty.” This powerful statement was issued by the late Senator Ted Kennedy while speaking to a campaign rally in Boston. Almost 20 years later, the fact of the matter is that many people in the United States live in either a state of poverty or a state of underemployment. As of last estimates from the Department of Labor and Treasury, almost 40% of Americans would qualify for some sort of assistance if they applied while 20% of the United States lives almost entirely on government sponsored means tested welfare. Furthermore, you have a large portion of Americans that live in a state of underemployment. A state of underemployment is where you have the basic needs taken care of, but at the bare minimum. The quality of life is low and even a small disaster, like a broken windshield on your car or a dead coffee maker might be irreplaceable. In a poll taken from last year, over half of Americans said that if they had an emergency that required \$1000 to fix, they didn’t know where they would get the money. This is a shocking statistic. The United States, over the last 200 years, has generated the most capital of any nation but yet in the last 50 years, the wage gap between the richest 1% and the 99% has grown.

When we look to the competing systems of social safety nets that we have or have proposed to solve this issue, we see that since the era of the Great Depression, we have had some form of social welfare that attempted to stave off the effects of job loss and poverty. One could argue that with the statistics from above, the system is failing, and that people are no better than they were in the Depression. This is where the proponents of the UBI would step in. They argue that providing a minimum of \$1000 a month for each adult would provide these adults with a baseline salary. Rather than starting with 0 as their monthly income, they would start at \$1000, which means that their paychecks can go that much further and the issue of underemployment would be greatly alleviated. This amount, \$12000, is just under the poverty line, and unlike welfare, if you make over the poverty line, your UBI benefits won’t be revoked, this amount will never change. This means that for someone making \$11000 a year working at a big box store, they would actually have an income of \$23000. This provides a lot of breathing room and can allow for quality of life adjustments like a better diet, upgrade to living arrangements, car repair, or even a chance at further education.

Opponents of the system would make arguments similar to those found above in the personal economy section. Welfare provides many passive programs that most people don’t take into account and with the pro side, those programs would be removed. Also, it is important to understand the cost in terms of supply side inflation. Although there wouldn’t be more money being printed or created, just reallocated from one major program to the UBI, the supplier of goods could raise their rates in response since they know that everyone now has a

UBI. Take for example apartment shopping. A landlord might raise the rate of an apartment if he or she knows everyone that applies for it has a guaranteed \$1000.

In a debate round, you want to quantify this to not only a quality of living but to a real-world impact. Much has been written that poverty is the number one killer in the world. One piece of evidence states that every 10 years, as many people would die worldwide from poverty as are killed by a nuclear war between the US and Russia. Although not claiming to solve for world poverty, if we can solve for a small amount of that in the United States, they we must take the advantage. In this aspect of the case, I actually support the reading of narratives. Usually I stick to emotions only but not stories as stories tend to cloud the debate, but to illustrate the plight of poverty in the US, look up “Children watching parents deal with poverty stories” and read what you find. It will break your heart. When negating, you need to dig in and be ready to debate the argument that the status quo might not be perfect but it solves better than the pro. Paint a counter narrative about the family that sees their benefits cut in half by the UBI. You will need to take the more humanistic approach on this point and the team that does this the best will likely win.

Sample Evidence

Poverty outweighs an ongoing thermonuclear war

James Gilligan, Department of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, 2000 edition, *Violence: Reflections on Our Deadliest Epidemic*, p. 195-196

The 14 to 18 million deaths a year caused by structural violence compare with about 100,000 deaths per year from armed conflict. Comparing this frequency of deaths from structural violence to the frequency of those caused by major military and political violence, such as World War II (an estimated 49 million military and civilian deaths, including those caused by genocide--or about eight million per year, 1935-1945), the Indonesian massacre of 1965-1966 (perhaps 575,000 deaths), the Vietnam war (possibly two million, 1954-1973), and even a hypothetical nuclear exchange between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R (232 million), it was clear that even war cannot begin to compare with structural violence, which continues year after year. In other word, every fifteen years, on the average, as many people die because of relative poverty as would be killed in a nuclear war that caused 232 million deaths; and every single year, two to three times as many people die from poverty throughout the world as were killed by the Nazi genocide of the Jews over a six-year period. This is, in effect, the equivalent of an ongoing, unending, in fact accelerating, thermonuclear war, or genocide, perpetrated on the weak and poor every year of every decade, throughout the world.

The poorest 10% of Americans take in substantial amounts of money and programs through welfare.

James D. Agresti 2-2-2020, "What Government Poverty Statistics Leave Out,,
<https://fee.org/articles/what-government-poverty-statistics-leave-out/>

While pressing her agenda to expand means-tested welfare programs, Democratic Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is claiming that the federal government's poverty statistics vastly undercount the number of Americans who are "destitute."

In reality, the exact opposite is true because those statistics omit a broad range of government benefits, charity, and unreported income. When these are counted, the poorest fifth of U.S. households consume five times more goods and services than the poverty stats reveal. These material resources amount to an average of more than \$50,000 per household per year, making the poorest fifth of Americans richer than the averages for all people in most developed nations of the world.

AOC's Claims

In a recent video, AOC alleges:

You would not know that our country is posting record profits because 40 million Americans are living in poverty right now, and if the poverty line was real—if it was around what some people think it should be—about \$38,000 a year, we will be shocked at how much the richest society on the planet is allowing so much of its people to live in destitute [sic].

Her number of 40 million is roughly equal to the Census Bureau's figure of 38.1 million, or 11.8% of the U.S. population. This represents merely one of the widely different ways of measuring poverty, but it is the federal government's official measure, and the media follows suit. As stated in a 2019 paper in the American Economic Journal: Applied Economics: "The official poverty rate is also one of the most cited government statistics in the popular press."

What's Excluded

Without vital context—which AOC and most news reports fail to provide—the oft-cited census poverty stats are highly misleading. For as the Census Bureau explains, they don't "include the value of noncash benefits such as those provided by SNAP [Food Stamps], Medicare, Medicaid, public housing," and a host of other goods and services that the poor receive from government and charities. More specifically:

Food Stamp beneficiaries received an average of \$3,200 per household in Food Stamps during 2017.

Medicaid beneficiaries received an average of \$7,794 per person in health care benefits during 2016.

Section 8 voucher beneficiaries received an average of \$8,333 per household in rental assistance during 2016.

Head Start beneficiaries received an average of \$9,871 per child in child care and preschool benefits during 2017.

Other government programs provide noncash welfare benefits in the form of utility assistance, college grants, school lunch, school breakfast, community health centers, family planning services, prescription drugs, job training, legal services, cell phones, cell phone service, and internet service.

Federal law requires most hospitals with emergency departments to provide an "examination" and "stabilizing treatment" for anyone who comes to such a facility and requests care for an emergency medical condition or childbirth, regardless of their ability to pay and immigration status.

Private charities provide additional benefits to low-income people, such as food, clothing, housing, and health care.

Furthermore, census income and poverty figures are obtained through household surveys, and low-income households don't report much of their cash income in such surveys. Regarding this:

A study published by the American Economic Journal in 2019 found that 63% of all New York State households who received benefits from two major cash welfare programs did not report any of this money to the Census Bureau.

The same study found that people who did report receiving cash welfare from these two programs received an average of 65% more money from the programs than they reported to the Census Bureau.

In 2013, the chief actuary of the U.S. Social Security Administration estimated that 3.9 million illegal immigrants worked “in the underground economy” during 2010.

In 2016, the IRS reported that 63% of income not reported to the IRS by third parties (like employers) is never reported to the IRS by the people who receive the money.

The Big Picture

An official federal measure that accounts for all of people’s material resources is called “consumption.” Recorded by the federal government’s Bureau of Economic Analysis, it is a comprehensive measure of the goods and services consumed by households. It is also the World Bank’s “preferred welfare indicator, for practical reasons of reliability and because consumption is thought to better capture long-run welfare levels than current income.” Significantly, a 2003 paper in the *Journal of Human Resources* explains that “consumption standards were behind the original setting of the poverty line,” but government changed to the current method because of its “ease of reporting.”

The Bureau of Economic Analysis normally reports consumption for the entire nation and doesn’t break down the data to show how people at different levels fare. However, it published a report in 2012 that does that for 2010. Placed side-by-side with the Census Bureau income figures that underlie its poverty stats, the differences are striking—particularly for the poorest and richest U.S. households:

The federal data graphed above show that the poorest 20% of U.S. households consumed an average of \$57,049 of goods and services per household in 2010, while they reported an average of \$11,034 in pre-tax money income to the Census Bureau. This means that widely reported federal poverty stats exclude about 80% of the material resources of low-income households. Put simply, the poorest fifth of U.S. households consume five times more goods and services than the poverty stats reveal.

AOC argues that the federal poverty line for “1 earner & a mother home full-time” should be \$38,000/year, as compared to the current line of about \$26,000 for a family of four. She attempts to justify this by saying that the current line “doesn’t include cost of child care, geographic cost of living, or health care.” What she neglects to say is that low-income households typically receive such items and many others for free or greatly reduced prices.

In contrast, most U.S. households earn their health care, housing, food, child care, phone service, and such for themselves while also paying taxes that fund these items for others. As a result, U.S. middle-income households consume only 26% more goods and services than the poorest fifth.

The facts are clear that frequently reported federal poverty stats vastly overstate the number of Americans who are destitute.

The impacts of this wealth redistribution are even more drastic for the richest fifth of U.S. households, who forfeit a large portion of their income to taxes and receive few government benefits. They report 15 times more pre-tax money income than the poorest fifth of households, but they consume only twice as many goods and services as the poorest fifth.

Given that the available data treat the poorest 20% of households as a single group, while 11.8% of U.S. residents are officially in poverty, one might assume that poor households consume markedly less than the \$57,049 average for the group. However, other government data suggest that is not the case. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics collects data on a subset of consumption called “consumer expenditures.” These show a mere \$2,179 difference between the lowest 10% of U.S. households and the second-lowest 10%. Since consumer expenditures exclude many forms of non-cash welfare and eligibility for welfare declines as income rises, the poorest 10% may consume more goods and services than the second-poorest 10%.

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Role of Government

The proper role of government is a debate that has existed for eons. It has extended past the creation of the United States and even before the days of the Romans and Greeks. Although there are political science majors that will get their master's degrees in this area, I will simplify this argument down to the primary faction. In traditional governmental philosophy, the role of government is that of a protector. Before government, people lived in a state of nature where rules were not set, and people could do what they wanted as freely as they wanted. As collectives of people grew, small communities became villages and eventually towns and cities. As these collectives grew, it was necessary for the people within the community to set out a system of rules to maintain social order. This social order was called the "social contract." What this says is that when a government is formed by the will of the people for the purpose of government, the people that enter into this government agree that the ability of the government to serve the people is best met by conceding some of their rights in order to allow the state to protect others. So when you enter into a society, you give up your right to randomly fight people for food and instead you agree that a barter or money system will be used. Under the philosophy that formed the United States, the social contract is designed for protection and punishment. The powers of the government extend to punish those that violate not only the norms set up by society but for acts that would be punishable outside in the state of nature. Thus, if an act violates both the expectations of society and it would be punishable in the state of nature, it is a just punishment. Under the doctrine of protection, governments are designed to protect people from outside dangers. Government create police forces and armies to defend against aggression and create laws to protect against outside harm.

In recent times, this has been extended to mean that protection also means the wellbeing of the people from social ills as well. The safety net that was established after the Great Depression illustrates this point. The need for the financial protection of the people was so great that government was forced to act. One could argue that this was necessary to protect the nation from collapse, but at the core was the desire to protect the people. Proponents of a UBI argue that their system is the next logical step in government protecting the people from undue harm.

The other side argues that this is an overreach of government. For most plans that would create a UBI, it involves the redistribution of wealth through a taxation system. On a philosophical level, a person has the right for self-determination. They have the right to make choices for themselves. The concept of taxation, especially for a redistribution of wealth violates this idea as their determination might not be for this as they have earned this wage and they are the only ones that have the right to redistribute it. Thus, this is an immoral act of a government under a social contract and it amounts to theft of wage by a government.

This debate is more than the “big government, small government” debates that the Democrats and Republicans want to engage in. This is about, at its core, the role of government on a philosophical level. It’s about whether the government is allowed to take actions and what constitutes the idea of “protection” of a people. Does protection just mean the physical wellbeing of an individual or does it mean the social wellbeing too? Can social wellbeing spillover to the physical if that person is sick and can’t afford a doctor or food or proper housing? What actions are considered just under the concept of the social contract if providing for a safety net isn’t one of them? If taxation is illegal in this case, does this mean I don’t have to pay taxes this April? All of these questions need to be answered, at least in your mind before you run this case, I recommend you read a bit into John Locke before debating this as his work formed the basis for our Declaration of Independence and Constitution.

Sample Evidence

John Locke's 2d Treatise on Government: "Of Civil Government" (in Chapter VII, "Of Political or Civil Society"): they are clearly about the social contract but only mention the right to operationalize the law of nature in detailed legislation, judge according to those laws, and mete out appropriate punishments:

§. 88. And thus the commonwealth comes by a power to set down what punishment shall belong to the several transgressions which they think worthy of it, committed amongst the members of that society, (which is the power of making laws) as well as it has the power to punish any injury done unto any of its members, by any one that is not of it, (which is the power of war and peace;) and all this for the preservation of the property of all the members of that society, as far as it is possible. But though every man who has entered into civil society, and is become a member of any commonwealth, has thereby quitted his power to punish offences, against the law of nature, in prosecution of his own private judgment, yet with the judgment of offences, which he has given up to the legislative in all cases, where he can appeal to the magistrate, he has given a right to the commonwealth to employ his force, for the execution of the judgments of the commonwealth, whenever he shall be called to it; which indeed are his own judgments, they being made by himself, or his representative. And herein we have the original of the legislative and executive power of civil society, which is to judge by standing laws, how far offences are to be punished, when committed within the commonwealth; and also to determine, by occasional judgments founded on the present circumstances of the fact, how far injuries from without are to be vindicated; and in both these to employ all the force of all the members, when there shall be no need.

§. 89. Wherever therefore any number of men are so united into one society, as to quit every one his executive power of the law of nature, and to resign it to the public, there and there only is a political, or civil society. And this is done, wherever any number of men, in the state of nature, enter into society to make one people, one body politic, under one supreme government; or else when any one joins himself too, and incorporates with any government already made; for hereby he authorizes the society, or which is all one, the legislative thereof, to make laws for him, as the public good of the society shall require: to the execution whereof, his own assistance (as to his own decrees) is due. And this puts men out of a state of nature into that of a commonwealth, by setting up a judge on earth, with authority to determine all the controversies, and redress the injuries that may happen to any member of the commonwealth; which judge is the legislative, or magistrates appointed by it. And wherever there are any number of men, however associated, that have no such decisive power to appeal to, there they are still in the state of nature.

UBI is theft

American TFP, 3-27-2019, "New Universal Basic Income Policy Steals From the Rich to Give to the Poor,"

One definition of insanity is "doing the same thing over and over expecting different results." The left seems to introduce the same old bad idea expecting the public to swallow it as a good one. No matter how many times the idea is rejected, they always find a way to repackage it. This time, the bad idea with a new name is Universal Basic Income (UBI).

Robin Hood's modus operandi was to steal from the rich and give to the poor; today's socialists are doing the same. Under the guise of fighting poverty, socialists take from those who will work and give to those who cannot or who will not.

Their goal is not prosperity or wealth creation. They want to level society. They hate inequality and hierarchy. And since there is never enough wealth to level society upward, it must always go downward. The planned result is always the same, the ruin of society. The list of leveled countries is well known and includes Russia, North Korea, Cuba and Venezuela to name a few.

Universal Basic Income's Long History

Universal Basic Income schemes have a long history. As early as the sixteenth century, socialist dreamers such as humanist Johannes Ludovicus Vives (1492-1540) advocated using the civil authorities to distribute a basic income to all citizens. The idea has also been known by titles such as negative income tax, social dividend, state bonus and national dividend. All such proposals call for unconditional and universal basic income. This socialist process always redistributes both wealth and poverty.

In 1969 President Nixon proposed the Family Assistance Plan. It was a catastrophic failure attempting to end welfare by guaranteeing a family of four an income of \$1,600 per year. At the time, the median household income was approximately \$7,400. Therefore, the program would have provided 21 percent of median family income for doing nothing. Questions about where this money would come from went unanswered.

During the seventies, the federal government ran four random control experiments in six different states implementing programs like UBI. Every state demonstrated identical results; the deterrent to work was appalling. For every family that received \$1,000 in free money, the average reduction in wages from work was \$660.

Green New Deal Taxes

Indeed, in all these schemes, governments can only give when they take away from others. They all must increase taxes sharply.

The recent proposal to supply UBI is the Green New Deal (GND) proposed by socialist Democrat Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. She plans a 70 percent tax on income over \$10 million to fund it.¹ The funds raised from this tax will not put a dent in the proposed cost of \$93 trillion needed for the GND. It will not

affect most taxpayers who are not rich. However, the move could well initiate an exodus of wealth from America as it has in other countries that have imposed similar confiscatory policies. At the very least, it would certainly serve to jump-start a new round of suffocating tax increases.

Cortez's interpretation of UBI would provide "a job with a family-sustaining wage, family and medical leave, vacations, and retirement security" and "economic security for all who are unable or unwilling to work."² It is unclear how offering UBI to every adult will offset a cost of \$650,000 per family to pay for the GND.

The Green New Deal Is a Bad Deal

Plato correctly affirms, "Statesmen cannot allow citizens to vote themselves benefits, drain the public treasury, increase public debt, and bankrupt the state. This is parekbaino,³ deviant and perverse."

The Green New Deal does exactly this by allowing massive government control of income, wealth and many details in the private lives of Americans. This is done under the guise of eliminating poverty and saving the planet.

The GND also proposes providing \$12,000 per year for every adult over eighteen regardless of need. This expense would require three more trillion dollars per year in taxes and would make up 75 percent of current total federal expenditures. Federal taxes would jump by at least 50 percent. Even if all food stamps, welfare and the Earned Income Tax Credit were eliminated, the savings would not put a dent in the deficit created by a UBI program, let alone the entire cost of the GND.

Sacrificing People on the Altar of Equality

However, worst of all, this proposal would shift government handouts from those who need them the most to absolutely everyone in the name of equality. Offering benefits to those who have no need of them or are unwilling to work is not an act of charity, but a means of creating dependency. Real charity would entail teaching the poor how to be self-sufficient and reap what they sow.

Welfare systems are susceptible to abuse and foster dependency and indolence. If money is given without making an effort, there is no incentive to work. If wage earners are penalized for working hard, they will be encouraged to stop laboring. For both groups, the result is injustice and disaster.

Failed Pilot Programs

Socialist pilot UBI programs always fail in every place they have been imposed. Finland is an excellent example. Its two-year experiment aimed at revamping the welfare system by reducing welfare recipients and increasing employment, failed in its first year

Participants were given free money whether they were actively seeking employment or not. This experiment failed to increase the employment of participants. Finland's socialist government had hoped that many participants would rush back into the labor force after receiving free money. However, the recipients saw no reason to work when money is free. The Finnish UBI program punished work and subsidized sloth.

The city government of Stockton California initiated a similar project in 2018 called the Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration, (SEED). The city is not known for its stellar financial management since it had declared bankruptcy four years earlier. Stockton's 27-year-old mayor Michael Tubbs cites Martin Luther King Jr. as the inspiration for the program since he referred to "a guaranteed minimum income for all people" during a 1967 speech at Stanford.

A very small number of participants had received money during the project's test period at \$500 per month and the money for Stockton's SEED pilot program came from private donors. Had the program been a real test, the money should be given to all citizens and the money taken from government coffers. Then the results would be clear for all to see.

The Failed Logic of UBI

Without imposing work requirements on recipients, the result will always be dependency and poverty. A sensible alternative would be to expand the earned income tax credit, a program that rewards work with benefits. This would have the same effect as guaranteeing a minimum income, but instead of giving money freely, it becomes linked to constructive contributions to society.

Implementing UBI will reduce the workforce and overburden taxpayers. The wealthy will flee and move money to safe havens. In France, President Macron has not only levied high taxes upon the wealthy; he has imposed a wealth tax on high value real estate. This has caused an exodus from France of the wealthiest residents at a rate of 12,000 millionaires per year.

A musty idea that failed from its conception, Universal Basic Income has no better chance of success today than it did centuries ago. Common sense and the cardinal virtue of justice dictate that hard work should be rewarded, not punished!

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Con Specific Arguments

Based on the nature of the resolution, the con side has a choice in strategy. One of the most popular that has emerged is to pick a theme in the case and find welfare programs that would or could be cut by eliminating means tested welfare. These arguments should fit into a narrative and have a consistent flow. Below is a short summary of the categories of programs that you might want to look into as you are crafting your con cases.

Women- There are many programs that have a direct effect on women. Federal job training programs focus on providing women with skills for nontraditional jobs like construction or medicine. Planned Parenthood is a program that many are familiar with due to the recent political coverage over this. Planned Parenthood provides women's health services to many that need low or no cost medical care. They also provide for free of charge, family planning initiatives. There are also other women's health programs that only focus on family planning or reproductive health. Programs that aid women but not directly or focused on women are childcare programs for working families and school after school programs.

Children- This is another large category. Children get access to a children's version of Medicare to provide for health insurance. Children in school have access to free and reduced cost school lunches and free meals from programs provided by the Department of Agriculture. Children have access to childcare stipends, after school programs, free weekend activity programs, special needs programs in school, speech therapy, issue related psychology, transportation, clothing, and other necessities as provided by means tested welfare programs.

Immigrants- In this category you have programs for language skills and job training and placement, college assistance and tuition coverage, childcare, cultural education classes, transportation to and from training and work, and other programs designed at making the transition from one country to the United States easier.

Nutrition- Families that are eligible can apply for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP.) SNAP provides up to \$500 for a family for monthly assistance in purchasing food for the home. Not included in this would be alcohol and tobacco and other items that are classified as luxury or non-essential. Although once given out in the form of a coupon book, it is not transmitted via a government issued debit card. The Child Nutrition Program provides free or reduced-cost lunches to 30 million children. It costs the federal government \$13.8 billion.

Medicare- Medicare is the government sponsored health insurance program for individuals and families that are at or below the poverty line. According to the Affordable Care Act, states could choose to expand Medicare programs and receive additional block grant funding to pay for this expansion. Medicaid paid for health care for 65 million low-income adults in 2019. It pays for 40% of all U.S. births.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families- (TANF) program provides a block grant to states and territories to provide families with financial assistance and related support services. State-administered programs may include childcare assistance, job preparation, and work assistance. TANF provided income to 1.2 million families. It benefited 822,192 adults and 2.3 million children. A three-person family received \$447 a month. Despite this help, they still lived below the poverty line.

Housing Assistance- Providing to 1.2 million units of public housing. The Housing Choice Voucher Program gives rent certificates for approved units. Local agencies administer grants to 2.2 million renters. Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program provides energy assistance and weatherization programs.

Earned Income Tax Credit- The Earned Income Tax Credit is a tax credit for families with at least one child. Over 22 million received credits for an average of \$3,191 for a family with children. EITC lifted approximately 5.6 million people out of poverty, 3 million of whom were children

Sample Evidence

New SNAP regulations will push thousands off of a needed program

Nexstar Broadcasting, 1-28-2020, "An Estimated 3,000 People in Southern Tier may lose Snap Benefits with new "Abawd" Waiver Rule," WIVT - NewsChannel 34,
<https://www.binghamtonhomepage.com/news/up-to-the-minute/an-estimated-3000-people-in-southern-tier-may-lose-snap-benefits-with-new-abawd-waiver-rule/>

On April 1, 2020, a new rule on eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is set to go into effect. It could result in thousands of New York state residents losing SNAP benefits, including about 3,330 in the Southern Tier, according to Hunger Solutions NY.

"More people will lose access to SNAP benefits earlier than they would have, meaning they will seek out the help of the Food Bank and its partners instead of using SNAP. For every meal provided by a food bank, SNAP provides nine, and our network cannot absorb this increased need," said Lyndsey Lyman, Food Bank Advocacy & Education Manager.

"SNAP is our nation's first line of defense against hunger and by further restricting who is eligible for SNAP, the federal administration is only further hurting people who are already in need," Lyman said. "The problem with the change in waivers is that they were there for a reason – because there aren't enough living wage jobs to go around in those areas. People want to work and to contribute, and to provide for their families themselves. However, when well-paying jobs are not available and hours are not steady, people still deserve to eat."

The USDA published its final rule restricting states' ability to waive areas of high unemployment from the SNAP Time Limit Rule in December 2019.

Currently, people ages 18-49 who are considered physically and mentally able to work and don't have any dependents must be working or volunteering at least 20 hours per week in order to receive SNAP benefits.

They must then track and report these hours monthly by phone, mail, or in person. Those in this age bracket who do not meet those criteria can only receive SNAP for three months in a three- year period.

Up until now, states with high unemployment rates could receive a waiver to the SNAP time limit rule. Currently, New York is one of 36 states that waive this rule in certain areas to ensure continued SNAP access for individuals in areas with insufficient jobs.

SNAP participation tracks unemployment levels and expands and contracts with the labor market. When the jobs market is good, SNAP participation goes down. The current proposal was included in the Farm Bill reauthorization in 2018 rejected by both branches of Congress.

Now, with sweeping changes to the waiver process, Hunger Solutions NY estimates that about 3,330 people in the Southern Tier could lose SNAP benefits. The estimates by county are:

Broome: 1,427 people

Chemung: 891 people

Schuyler: 105 people

Steuben: 526 people

Tioga: 98 people

Tompkins: 283 people

Across New York State, an estimated 113,000 individuals will be newly subjected to the rule, including 73,000 people in NYC and 40,000 upstate.

With the cuts, the NYS economy stands to lose \$102 million annually in SNAP benefits. That's fewer federal dollars flowing into local grocery stores and farms.

While the final rule is scheduled to take effect on April 1, 2020, national anti-hunger advocates are evaluating all options to fight this rule.

Undocumented Immigrants can no longer receive welfare benefits

Las Vegas Review-Journal, "EDITORIAL: A collision between the welfare state, immigration," Las Vegas Review-Journal, <https://www.reviewjournal.com/opinion/editorials/editorial-a-collision-between-the-welfare-state-immigration-1950356/>

Lost amid the impeachment din, President Donald Trump scored a major victory last week when the U.S. Supreme Court allowed his administration to block thousands of illegal immigrants from receiving welfare benefits while a dispute over the plan winds through the courts.

Last year, the Department of Homeland Security issued a rule intended to prevent noncitizens from becoming dependent on government programs. The rule allows federal officials to deny residency or green cards to those they believe may need non-cash public assistance — including food stamps, Medicaid or housing vouchers — for more than a year.

The usual hotbeds of Trump resistance — California, New York, Illinois — had challenged the proposal, leading a federal judge in October to issue a nationwide injunction against enforcement. On Jan. 27, however, high court justices eliminated that roadblock.

Immigration advocates were aghast. "Never before," said Doug Rand, co-founder of Boundless Immigration, "have we said you have to be comfortably middle class before you come to America."

And thus we see the collision between open borders, illegal immigration and the welfare state.

America is built on the hopes and dreams of immigrants. But for the first 190 years of this nation's existence, those immigrants arrived on our shores largely without any expectation of public handouts for food, shelter, medical care or anything else. Today, progressives advocate turning that equation on its head in a race for votes cynically cloaked as compassion.

It was only 24 years ago that President Bill Clinton, a Democrat, signed a law holding immigrant sponsors responsible for the costs of any welfare benefits received by their charges. Current law also already prevents legal immigrants from collecting means-tested federal benefits for five years. Is it so unreasonable that many U.S. taxpayers might balk at immediately subsidizing migrants who enter the country illegally?

The debate over illegal immigration is too often dominated by extremists locked in a cage match over whether to throw open the borders or to conduct mass deportations. The distinction between legal and illegal immigration — along with the costs and economic value of each — becomes clouded. Where is the reasonable middle ground?

A recent Harvard study, Reason magazine reports, found that many Americans would be less hostile toward immigration if advocates made “the case that immigrants don’t need handouts to succeed.” Viewed through that lens, perhaps the administration plan to restrict public assistance can be seen as pro-immigrant, while the Democratic demand that taxpayers write a check so illegal immigrants may collect the “free” stuff they propose is, ironically, precisely the opposite.

Immigrants will not be required to pass a wealth test before getting a visa

PBS Newshour, 1-29-2020, "How a wealth test for immigrants could affect the U.S. economy," PBS NewsHour, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/economy/making-sense/how-a-wealth-test-for-immigrants-could-affect-the-u-s-economy>

Both supporters and opponents of a new Trump administration rule that creates additional barriers for immigrants trying to enter the U.S. or trying to gain legal permanent residency are using economic arguments to make their cases.

The so-called “public charge” rule bars immigrants from coming to the U.S., claiming that if they are deemed to be unable to support themselves financially, they are at risk of needing federal safety net benefits—or becoming a “public charge” of the federal government. It also penalizes immigrants living in the U.S. who are trying to become lawful permanent residents, if they use federal safety net programs.

The rule is being challenged in court, but the U.S. Supreme Court this week allowed the change to go into effect and become enforceable while it makes its way through the judicial system.

Under the new guidance, immigrants who use a public benefit for more than 12 months in a 36-month period would be penalized in their application to become a legal permanent resident—commonly known as a green card holder. Each individual benefit counts toward the total time, so using both food and housing assistance for one month, for example, could count as two months worth of benefits.

If the household income of an immigrant trying to come to the U.S. is less than 125 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, or \$21,550 for a couple, they could also be at risk of being denied entry. The Department of Homeland Security said it would use that threshold as one of several factors when deciding whether to admit an immigrant to the U.S. Immigrants with twice that income, or 250 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, would be given higher preference.

Refugees exempt from new welfare requirements

PBS Newshour, 1-29-2020, "How a wealth test for immigrants could affect the U.S. economy," PBS NewsHour, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/economy/making-sense/how-a-wealth-test-for-immigrants-could-affect-the-u-s-economy>

The White House has argued the rule, which some are calling a “wealth test,” will benefit American workers and save taxpayer dollars. Immigration advocates counter that it is creating an unnecessary barrier for hardworking immigrants trying to better their lives and who contribute to the U.S. economy.

Meanwhile, economists caution that it’s difficult to estimate the exact cost or savings from the rule because it depends on how strictly it is enforced and there could be numerous ripple effects that will reverberate throughout the economy for years. It is also unclear what the cost would be for enforcing the rule, or for checking on immigrants’ household income before coming to the U.S.

Immigrants make up a small share of the welfare program

PBS Newshour, 1-29-2020, "How a wealth test for immigrants could affect the U.S. economy," PBS NewsHour, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/economy/making-sense/how-a-wealth-test-for-immigrants-could-affect-the-u-s-economy>

On the whole, immigrants make up a small share of all Americans who use federal public assistance programs. U.S-born individuals, for example, make up 86 percent of both Medicaid and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, recipients.

Immigrants also use less total welfare and entitlement benefits in dollar value than native-born Americans, according to a report from the CATO Institute, a libertarian think-tank.

In total, native-born Americans used \$6,976 worth of welfare programs per person in 2016. That's compared to \$5,535 per immigrants—a 21 percent difference.

The discrepancy is largely due to a higher rate of native-born Americans using Medicare and Social Security benefits than immigrants. About 18 percent and 19 percent of native-born Americans use Medicare and Social Security benefits, respectively. That's compared to 12 percent and 14 percent of immigrants.

Native-born Americans are also more likely to use the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); and SNAP, which is commonly known as food stamps.

Immigrants are more likely to use Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid than native-born Americans. About 4 percent of immigrants use SSI, compared to 3.5 percent of native-born citizens. Around 24.5 percent of immigrants use Medicaid, compared to 23 percent of native-born Americans, according to the CATO report.

Undocumented immigrants, which by some estimates make up half of all non U.S. citizens living in the country, are generally ineligible to receive federal benefits.

In response to public comments about the public charge rule, the Department of Homeland Security did not dispute the CATO findings but said they "are not inconsistent" with its final rule.

In a news conference last year, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Director Ken Cuccinelli said the issue is not how immigrants' benefits compare to native-born citizens, but whether the immigrants coming to the U.S. are self-sufficient.

"The benefit to taxpayers is a long-term benefit of seeking to ensure that our immigration system is bringing people to join us as American citizens, as legal permanent residents first, who can stand on their own two feet, who will not be reliant on the welfare system — especially in the age of the modern welfare state, which is so expansive and expensive," Cuccinelli said.

Immigrants contribute to the economy

PBS Newshour, 1-29-2020, "How a wealth test for immigrants could affect the U.S. economy," PBS NewsHour, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/economy/making-sense/how-a-wealth-test-for-immigrants-could-affect-the-u-s-economy>

Around 1.2 million people seeking to become green card holders each year would be subject to the rule, but many of those are not eligible for, or already choose not to use public benefits. However, there are likely millions more immigrants trying to come to the U.S. who could also be affected.

The Department of Homeland Security estimates 382,264 immigrants per year will be affected by the changes. The New American Economy, a nonprofit that focuses on immigration research, puts the estimate much higher—at 3.9 million.

If all of those immigrants were barred from living in the U.S., the nation's economy would lose about \$82 billion per year, the New American Economy analysis finds. That number includes \$48 billion the affected immigrants would earn in income each year, plus an estimated \$34 billion that would otherwise be generated because of the money they spend in the U.S economy and the amount they would pay in taxes.

The Department of Homeland Security has estimated a much lower cost—\$144.4 million. It also estimates that federal and state governments will pay out \$2.47 billion less each year in benefits—a key Trump administration argument for implementing the changes.

The public charge rule aside, first-generation immigrants generally cost the government more than U.S.-born Americans, according to a 2017 report from the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine. On average they cost about \$1,600 per person annually

But the children of those immigrants have a net positive effect on the U.S. economy, contributing about \$1,700 per person per year. Third generation immigrants contribute about \$1,300 annually.

The financial burden of immigration tends to fall more heavily on state and local governments because of the cost of their children's public school. At the same time, investing in children's education, health care and food security is likely to make them more productive workers with higher incomes later in life, which, in turn, generates more tax revenue.

"Adequate resources in childhood matter a lot for self-sufficiency and wellbeing later in life," said Tara Watson, an economics professor at Williams College. "If we restrict benefits available to children who will grow up to be adults, in the long run we may be doing more harm than good."

How federal benefits play into productivity

Studies have shown that people experiencing financial strain tend to be less productive in their work, largely due to the mental burden of not being able to meet their basic needs.

“If you are more concerned with your immediate needs to feed yourself, to house yourself, to make yourself warm, you are not able to make those investments that will help you make smarter decisions about your future and your family’s future,” said Andrew Lim, director of quantitative research for New American Economy.

Public welfare advocates say federal benefits, such as food stamps and housing assistance, alleviate financial stress, and more worker productivity tends to mean higher pay, which, in turn, means more contributions to federal taxes and the U.S. economy as a whole. Conversely, if a person does not have access to basic health care, they could become sick and unable to work.

The Department of Homeland Security has said it “does not agree that this rule would be the cause of such unfortunate events,” such as a person becoming ill.

How fewer lower skilled workers would affect certain industries

While higher-skilled immigrants tend to make more money and, therefore, contribute more to the U.S. economy, certain industries rely heavily on lower-skilled immigrants.

The hospitality, agriculture and construction sectors in particular have been facing labor shortages in recent years.

The expanding economy has been creating more jobs, but a crackdown on unauthorized immigrants, combined with better job opportunities in immigrants’ home countries—particularly in Mexico—have contributed to a shortage of workers.

If fewer low-income immigrants are allowed into the U.S. because of the public charge rule, those shortages are likely to worsen.

But the Trump administration has taken other steps to increase the number of immigrants workers allowed into the U.S. each year to work specifically in the agriculture industry and in seasonal jobs, which could offset some of the reduction that might be caused by the public charge rule.

Abandoning welfare would create a chilling effect for immigrants

PBS Newshour, 1-29-2020, "How a wealth test for immigrants could affect the U.S. economy," PBS NewsHour, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/economy/making-sense/how-a-wealth-test-for-immigrants-could-affect-the-u-s-economy>

Opponents of the public charge rule argue it could have a chilling effect, causing immigrants who are legally allowed to use federal public benefits to forgo utilizing those programs—particularly children who are U.S. citizens but live with their immigrant parents.

While it is unclear whether there is a direct link to the rule's unveiling in 2018, SNAP participation rates among families with immigrant members fell between March 2018 and March 2019.

During the same time, the participation rate for households with no immigrants increased, according to Watson's analysis of federal data that was first published in Econofact.

In response to concerns about a chilling effect, the Department of Homeland Security said in its final rule that it expects immigrants "will make purposeful and well-informed decisions," but the agency said they declined to scale back the rule to avoid the possibility that individuals might choose not to enroll in welfare programs because "self-sufficiency is the rule's ultimate aim."

An economic or value judgment?

In the end, Watson said it is difficult to calculate exactly how much the public charge rule will affect the U.S. economy.

The change is a rule, not a law, and the language is fairly vague, so the next presidential administration could choose how much weight to give the income thresholds and public benefits measurements when considering the host of factors involved in an immigrants' application for legal status.

While some countries put more emphasis on immigrants' skillset when considering admission, the U.S. has historically prioritized family reunification. If the public charge rule is strictly enforced, the U.S. would be signaling a major shift in its immigration policy

"We would lose the emphasis on families," Watson said. "And that's a value judgment the American people need to make."

For their part, Trump administration officials have said the rule promotes the "ideals of self-sufficiency and personal responsibility."

Further Reading

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Feeding America "What is SNAP?," <https://www.feedingamerica.org/take-action/advocate/federal-hunger-relief-programs/snap>

"Increase funding for housing choice voucher program to help end homelessness," San Francisco Examiner, <https://www.sfexaminer.com/opinion/increase-funding-for-housing-choice-voucher-program-to-help-end-homelessness/>

Steven A. Camarota November 20, 2018, 11-20-2018, "63% of Non-Citizen Households Access Welfare Programs," CIS.org, <https://cis.org/Report/63-NonCitizen-Households-Access-Welfare-Programs>

Turbotax – Taxes, Income Tax"5 Facts About the Earned Income Tax Credit," No Publication, <https://turbotax.intuit.com/tax-tips/tax-deductions-and-credits/5-facts-about-the-earned-income-tax-credit/L6YfN8sCL>

Conclusion

Despite our political differences, the fact of the matter is that both political parties realize that the current system for providing assistance to people that need it is flawed. With means tested welfare, the system is largely out of date with levels of poverty having been set in a day and age before the need for modern necessities and when the largest expenditure that a family might have to make outside of purchasing a house was a car and when utilities included a phone and electricity. Today, we have things such as internet utilities, cell phones, and college loans along with modern issues like credit debt. Compound this with the fact that since the 1970's, wages in America have not risen at the same rate as inflation, so each American is making equal to or less than in the past but having to pay for more. With welfare, you have the constant threat that if you make more than the poverty level, you might see some of your benefits removed or cut. Our national debt is rising at a pace that is unsustainable. The proposal that has been put forth by politicians like Andrew Yang would implement a universal basic income to all adult individuals between the ages of 18 to 65. In doing so, everyone would be lifted to the poverty level with no threat of a cut off if they make more than this.

The debate that will be had revolved around which system is best suited to help families and people. Does freeing up the restrictions on money to allow for people to spend it on what they chose without restriction promote better economic growth than social programs? Do people feel more empowered by not having the stigma of being on welfare help worker motivation? Will people invest or spend more if given a basic income? How will this change social programs as we know it? On a national level, we have questions to how this will affect the national debt and federal spending. On one hand, welfare programs do cost a large amount each year, but would a UBI be any cheaper? And do we balance that out with the projected increase to consumer spending? How do we pay for it? Do we tax the rich or do we tax automation?

Finally, there is the moral aspect. Poverty is an ugly stain on the United States. Too many people are living from paycheck to paycheck, not knowing where their next meal will come from. Too many kids are going hungry at night. One of the saddest moments of my first year of teaching was listening to kids talk about how they would take home parts of their lunch because they knew that over the weekend, they might only get a few meals. These were the same kids that came to school on Monday with some of the worst behavior. At first, I attributed this to personality, but I have come to know that when hungry, kids aren't focused on learning or behavior, they are focused on their stomachs. As Ted Kennedy put it, no one should live in poverty in the richest country in the world. At this point, we must answer the questions as to what is the role of government in this? Does the government have an obligation to assist those in need? Can we justify taxing other to pay for the programs for the needy?

This debate is about the virtues of human nature and at its core, it is about how we help others. Which system is the best and which can provide the most benefits to our fellow human? We must take this resolution with a grain of salt. Remember, even if you oppose both systems or you dislike one significantly, there are those that rely on these for their daily survival. You don't know the situation of your opponents in any given round. Be kind and courteous. You can disagree with welfare while not sounding like you are Scrooge. You can dislike UBI without mocking Yang's plan. Be respectful and remember that debate is a place for ideas to meet and find common ground. You are the future, and someday, you might be in a position where you are the one making a choice or casting a vote for a system of assistance. Be open and mindful of the critical discussion that will happen over the course of the next month and remember that the statistics, stories, and programs you talk about all have people behind them. I ask you as a personal plea to be respectful no matter the arguments that you make. Be better than the normal course of political discourse we see in Washington.

Good luck and have fun.

Pro Arguments At-A-Glance

ARGUMENT	TALKING POINTS	CON RESPONSES
ECONOMY (NATIONAL)	<p>Would reduce the deficit.</p> <p>Will boost government revenue.</p> <p>Would cut government spending.</p>	<p>UBI would cost billions more than we take in. Would explode the debt.</p> <p>No proof that more money would be generated.</p> <p>Could drastically spike government spending.</p>
WHO WILL PAY?	<p>Value Added Tax</p> <p>Carbon Tax</p> <p>Manufacturing Tax</p>	<p>Hurts the consumer by double taxing goods.</p> <p>Kills business and moves business overseas.</p> <p>Would kill business and would not generate much revenue.</p>
ECONOMY (PERSONAL)	<p>Would improve quality of life.</p> <p>Would boost personal savings.</p> <p>Would provide some breathing room between paychecks.</p>	<p>Welfare provides more benefits than UBI ever could. Quality of life would decrease.</p> <p>No additional savings as people need all the money to make up for the lost welfare programs..</p>
POVERTY REDUCTION	<p>Providing a \$12000 yearly for people would raise everyone to the poverty line so any additional income would be beneficial.</p> <p>UBI doesn't have a "cliff" so making money won't cause you to lose the UBI.</p>	<p>Welfare provides more benefits for people. The loss in benefits would hurt individuals and families.</p> <p>Children would be disproportionately hurt as they don't get UBI but they do get welfare.</p>
ROLL OF GOVERNMENT	<p>Libertarians support the UBI.</p> <p>It gets government out of politics by reducing the size of the welfare bureaucracy.</p>	<p>It's theft, it takes money from people without good reason.</p> <p>A just government wouldn't not redistribute wealth.</p>
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Con Arguments At-A-Glance

ARGUMENT	TALKING POINTS	CON RESPONSES
ECONOMY (NATIONAL)	<p>UBI is expensive and even cutting welfare won't be enough to pay for it.</p> <p>UBI hurts the general public. Less money means less spending for the individual.</p>	<p>UBI can be funded through a series of taxes and through the transition from welfare.</p> <p>UBI puts money in the hands of the public without restriction.</p>
HOW WILL WE PAY FOR IT?	<p>Taxing through a Value Added Tax, carbon tax, or a tax on manufacturing will kill business, hurt the consumer, or collect so little that the UBI will have a negative impact and a negative balance.</p>	<p>A Value Added Tax, a carbon tax, or manufacturing tax would all generate billions of dollars for people while allowing for the total funding of a UBI. It would force the wealthy to pay their fair share to help all Americans.</p>
ECONOMY (PERSONAL)	<p>UBI decreases quality of life as welfare provides more funds to those that need it.</p> <p>UBI won't promote transition as people will use the money to pay down debt.</p>	<p>UBI is designed to work with an income to assist in quality of life, not be an income that you can live off.</p> <p>Paying down debt is good too. Less debt means more financial freedom.</p>
POVERTY REDUCTION	<p>UBI will reduce overall benefits thus plunging people deeper into poverty.</p> <p>Only job training, provided by welfare benefits, can solve for poverty.</p>	<p>UBI will provide people with an income equal to the poverty line. This amount will help dramatically.</p> <p>UBI allows for people to do the job training or college they want for their career they choose. UBI has more flexibility.</p>
ROLE OF GOVERNMENT	<p>Government should be limited in nature.</p> <p>A UBI is theft as it takes money from people without their consent.</p>	<p>Government has a duty to protect people. Providing UBI is protecting those that need assistance.</p> <p>If UBI is theft, all taxes are theft, and the courts have ruled that income taxes are legal.</p>
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