

# Presidents on Poverty

Americans have never completely agreed on the most effective way to combat poverty, and our level of engagement has varied with the times. Need examples? Here are a few excerpts from presidential speeches on poverty. Your task: Match the excerpt with the appropriate president.

Match each quote with a president and write the letter next to the speaker's portrait...



Herbert Hoover



Gerald Ford



Franklin D. Roosevelt



Jimmy Carter



Harry Truman



Ronald Reagan



Dwight D. Eisenhower



George H.W. Bush



John F. Kennedy



Bill Clinton



Lyndon B. Johnson



George W. Bush



Richard Nixon



Barack Obama

A

"Given a chance to go forward with the policies of the last eight years, we shall soon, with the help of God, be in sight of the day when poverty will be banished from this nation."

"Economic depression cannot be cured by legislative action or executive pronouncement. Economic wounds must be healed by the action of the cells of the economic body—the producers and consumers themselves."

B

"This social security measure gives at least some protection to thirty millions of our citizens who will reap direct benefits through unemployment compensation, through old-age pensions and through increased services for the protection of children and the prevention of ill health."

"We can never insure one hundred percent of the population against one hundred percent of the hazards and vicissitudes of life, but we have tried to frame a law which will give some measure of protection to the average citizen and to his family against the loss of a job and against poverty-ridden old age."

C

"Today, we are ending welfare as we know it, but I hope this day will be remembered not for what it ended, but for what it began."

"While far from perfect, this legislation provides an historic opportunity to end welfare as we know it and transform our broken welfare system by promoting the fundamental values of work, responsibility, and family."

D

"In this society, we are conservative about the values and principles which we cherish; but we are forward-looking in protecting those values and principles and in extending their benefits. We have rejected the discredited theory that the fortunes of the Nation should be in the hands of a privileged few. We have abandoned the "trickle-down" concept of national prosperity. Instead, we believe that our economic system should rest on a democratic foundation and that wealth should be created for the benefit of all.

The American people have decided that poverty is just as wasteful and just as unnecessary as preventable disease. We have pledged our common resources to help one another in the hazards and struggles of individual life. We believe that no unfair prejudice or artificial distinction should bar any citizen of the United States of America from an education, or from good health, or from a job that he is capable of performing."

E

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all in any true sense."

F

"I call my philosophy and approach compassionate conservatism. It is compassionate to actively help our fellow citizens in need. It is conservative to insist on responsibility and results. And with this hopeful approach, we will make a difference in people's lives."

G

"If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich."

H

"This administration today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America. I urge this Congress and all Americans to join with me in that effort."

"Unfortunately, many Americans live on the outskirts of hope—some because of their poverty, and some because of their color, and all too many because of both. Our task is to help replace their despair with opportunity."

I

"We face an urban crisis, a social crisis—and at the same time, a crisis of confidence in the capacity of government to do its job.

A third of a century of centralizing power and responsibility in Washington has produced a bureaucratic monstrosity, cumbersome, unresponsive, ineffective.

A third of a century of social experiment has left us a legacy of entrenched programs that have outlived their time or outgrown their purposes.

A third of a century of unprecedented growth and change has strained our institutions, and raised serious questions about whether they are still adequate to the times.

It is no accident, therefore, that we find increasing skepticism—and not only among our young people, but among citizens everywhere—about the continuing capacity of government to master the challenges we face.

Nowhere has the failure of government been more tragically apparent than in its efforts to help the poor and especially in its system of public welfare."

J

"A government big enough to give you everything you want is a government big enough to take from you everything you have."

K

"The measure of a society is found in how they treat their weakest and most helpless citizens."

L

"The size of the federal budget is not an appropriate barometer of social conscience or charitable concern."

M

"The fact is prosperity has a purpose. It is to allow us to pursue 'the better angels,' to give us time to think and grow. Prosperity with a purpose means taking your idealism and making it concrete by certain acts of goodness. It means helping a child from an unhappy home learn how to read—and I thank my wife Barbara for all her work in literacy. It means teaching troubled children through your presence that there's such a thing as reliable love. Some would say it's soft and insufficiently tough to care about these things. But where is it written that we must act as if we do not care, as if we are not moved?

Well I am moved. I want a kinder, gentler nation."

N

"In the 21st century, one of the best anti-poverty programs is a world-class education."