



September 5, 2007

editorial

## **Can we end poverty by 2020?**

The solution comes with intervention, not assistance.

**T**he state Legislature recently formed a commission to end poverty in Minnesota by 2020.

A commission to end poverty is not new to Minnesota. In 1986, Gov. Rudy Perpich established a Governor's Commission on Poverty. The commission's purpose, similar to the current commission's, was to identify strategies to end poverty by 2000. The commission gave way to several government assistance initiatives such as the Working Family Tax Credit and Basic Sliding Fee Child Care that have aided many impoverished Minnesotans. Still, the assistance programs can only sustain the poor - they cannot end poverty as they only address symptoms, not causes.

Since 2000, the poor remain and continue to grow in numbers in Minnesota and throughout the United States.

In February, the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies reported 7,605,363 U.S. families out of roughly 74 million live below poverty level. Currently, for a family of four in the U.S., the poverty level is \$20,650 a year in earned income. However, according to the National Center for Children in Poverty, families need to earn at least double the poverty level to make ends meet. In view of this, 20,152,000 families in the United States and 223,000 families in Minnesota live below 200 percent of poverty level. Around 25 percent of people in most U.S. states live below 200 percent of poverty level and cannot make ends meet.

Few families are new to poverty - just as a child born into wealth is more likely to live wealthy, a child born into poverty is more likely to live poor. Inherited status is the dividing line in America. The family a child is reared into determines the education, health-care and opportunities that child will receive. An individual can transcend class with government assistance, but a class cannot transcend itself without complete government intervention.

The Minnesota Legislative Commission to End Poverty by 2020 will fail to end poverty, just as the 1986 commission failed, unless they recognize poverty's causes and intervene.

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