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Rokita: Waiver of Welfare Work Requirements Goes “Against Entire Idea of Human Dignity, Earned Success” (with VIDEO)

The full text of Rokita’s remarks is below; video is [here](#)

(Washington, D.C.) – U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita, a member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, today voted to approve legislation to block President Obama from implementing a waiver of work requirements in the 1996 welfare reform law.

“The decision by this Administration to waive the work requirements is not only bad policy, but bad governance. It fails, in my opinion, just like so many of our social entitlement laws do, to honor the idea of earned success.

“The work requirements have worked – no longer are we giving a hand out, we are giving a hand up. And that is why we cannot let this administration undo them,” Rokita said prior to the vote.

In July, the Department of Health and Human Services began allowing states to seek a waiver of work requirements for welfare recipients, weakening the efforts to assist needy families contained in the historic 1996 welfare reforms. According to the Government Accountability Office, because the administration’s waiver policy is a rule, it is subject to Congressional disapproval under the Congressional Review Act (CRA).

According to the committee, the legislation approved today (H.J.Res. 118) will:

- Express Congress’s disapproval of the Obama administration’s regulatory effort to weaken welfare reform;
- Prevent the administration from implementing its plan to waive the work requirements of the 1996 welfare reform law; and

- Preserve critical reforms that have helped lift millions of American families out of poverty.

A video of Rokita's full statement from the markup is [here](#). The full text of his remarks is below:

“The problem I have with what the administration did is that we really don't know what its intent is with regard to the waiver that they're proposing. And that's why this is Congress' job. The decision by this Administration to waive the work requirements is not only bad policy, but bad governance. It fails, in my opinion, just like so many of our social entitlement laws do, to honor the idea of earned success.

“Earned success is the idea that you're creating value with your life and value in the lives of others, however you want to define that. That you're not living on handouts. And that's why I was so intrigued by the reforms of 1996. Because it required able-bodied persons to work. And that's why I'm so troubled by this administration's decision to waive the work requirements for welfare recipients.

“This decision devalues work. It downplays the importance of work to human dignity. In America, we've always believed that work was a good thing. That as human beings, we were created to do good work – to create value with our lives and value in the lives of others.

“We are a nation that is generous to our neighbors, and we help those who are in need. In fact, according to the World Giving Index, Americans are the MOST generous people in the world. However, we also want to know that each one of us is doing what we can to exercise our personal responsibility and improve our situation in life.

“And what the administration is basically saying is that dignity comes in fact from the government, at their timing and at their pleasure and not from individuals using their God-given capacity to work.

“The genius of the 1996 welfare reforms is that it acknowledged the destruction caused by an unlimited welfare system that discouraged work, and it changed that system so as to promote work. It was tremendously successful. And now, the administration wants to take a giant step backward.

“Not only is this morally wrong, and against the entire idea of human dignity and earned success, but what the administration is doing is something it doesn’t even have the legal authority to do.

“Polls continue to show us that a majority of Americans believe that able-bodied adults receiving public assistance should work while they receive that assistance.

“A welfare program should only be considered successful if it helps people get off welfare. The reforms put in place in 1996 have done just that. Following the enactment of the 1996 law, the welfare caseload fell by half. Employment of single mothers increased by 15 percent. Child poverty in female-headed households fell significantly. Before the reforms, the average length of stay on welfare was 13 years. It is now capped at 5 years and our data for Fiscal Year 2009 shows that only 1.7 percent of the case closings that year were due to people maxing out their time in the welfare system.

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