

**EIR:** What is the Kennedy-Snowe act?

**Edelman:** Sens. [Edward] Kennedy [D-Mass.] and [Olympia] Snowe [R-Me.] have a bill that would extend health coverage to low-income parents. So, that's a separate bill. And there's a whole series of things. The Earned Income Tax Credit needs to be improved. We need more funding for child care through the child-care legislation.

**EIR:** So that all back to the state of the economy.

**Edelman:** Yes, but the debate should not be just about welfare. Within welfare itself, we should be certainly talking about reviving and re-extending aid to legal immigrants, which has still not been fully restored. And there's a whole bunch of things having to do with time limits. You shouldn't be subject to the time limits if you get extra money while you're working. That's ridiculous. But they are. That's Federal law. If a state uses Federal money to help somebody who already has a job, Federal TANF money, it counts against that person's time limits. Time limits shouldn't apply during recessions, either national or local. Time limits shouldn't apply to moms who are staying home taking care of chronically ill, disabled kids, or infirm relatives.

**EIR:** What about adults who are chronically ill and disabled?

**Edelman:** That's more complicated. If somebody is disabled, but not legally disabled, how do you handle that under that law? They can't draw disability because they don't quite qualify, but they're still not very effective workers. That's hard to articulate, and maybe the best you can do with that sort of person is to cover them under the 20% exception, but they should raise the 20%.

So, there will be a whole bunch of things about time limits. Then, how do we put some kind of limits on the states that are what I call the outliers, with particularly awful policies? That's hard, but I would say, if you want to have a time limit shorter than five years, you have to have exceptions for people who can't find jobs.

**EIR:** Yes, or a whole lot more gravediggers.

**Edelman:** Something like that. And if you want to terminate somebody from the rolls, you've got to have a face-to-face meeting and figure out some kind of a plan for them, if you're not going to give them cash assistance. So, those are the sorts of issues. People will talk about somehow rewarding states that use the policies to reduce poverty, rather than simply to reduce the welfare rolls. Nobody has an exact proposal for that, but that certainly sounds good.

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## Interview: Joseph M. Neal, Jr.

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*State Sen. Joseph M. Neal, Jr. (D-N. Las Vegas) is chairman of the Nevada Legislative Black Caucus. He was interviewed by Marianna Wertz, on Sept. 12.*

**EIR:** You recently attended a national conference of the Community Action Agencies, set up in the 1970s under President Johnson's War on Poverty, where Bush's plan to replace these agencies with the Faith-Based Initiative was discussed.

**Neal:** During the conference, it became obvious to me that, with the statements that President Bush has made himself—that the War on Poverty has "served its usefulness," and had not done what it was intended to do, and it was a failure—this to me suggested that their aim and purpose seems to be that they want to substitute the Faith-Based Initiative for the War on Poverty program.

**EIR:** Yes, they pretty much announced that at a conference they had in Washington last week.

**Neal:** So, that seems to be the direction that I gather that they are tending to take, to destroy the War on Poverty program, and use that money for other things, and put the burden of taking care of the poor upon the faith-based organizations, the churches.

**EIR:** Are the churches in any capacity to handle the poverty?

**Neal:** No, they're not. Nothing that you can demand of a church, in terms of helping anybody—it's out of the goodness of the church that they decide to help. In any case, except it's forthcoming from any faith-based organization, their membership comes first. If you happen not to be a part of that church, then you're not going to be getting any help.

**EIR:** LaRouche has called this "state-run prostitution."

**Neal:** Yeah. It could be that, too. I see, without having these organizations to take care of the poor—and these organizations have done a tremendous job in directing resources out to the most needy. As a part of that program, Head Start has been one of the most successful programs of the War on Poverty. They have taken the children at a very early age, and the reports that I've been privileged to see, and people who've talked to me about those reports, indicate that those kids do very well when they get into school. Over many years, those children have been very successful.

In my judgment, to eliminate the War on Poverty, because there seems to be a growing depression in this country, would be very devastating to many who still need the services of those various organizations.

**EIR:** This comes as welfare recipients in many states will soon run out of their five-year time limit for cash assistance.

**Neal:** That's true. The five-year limit for welfare is running out, and there seems to be a need to go somewhere for assistance, and something to identify job capabilities or training or housing or whatever. Many of these [agency] programs engage in those particular services. I don't think that you can depend upon the United Way and the Salvation Army—particularly the Salvation Army, which is moving in on the poverty program—to take care of all of these needs across the country.