

law, probably you wouldn't do very well.

EIR: We spoke in Los Angeles with Bob Ehrlenbusch, executive director of the Los Angeles Coalition to End Hunger and Homelessness. He said that he believes the purpose of the welfare reform legislation is to make people homeless, because the end result is that there is a rising wave of homelessness.

DeLessio: We were just literally inundated before Christmas with people with no money, that were being evicted or whatever. A lot of this is unseen. We don't have people on the street dying. But we're seeing increasing numbers. Again, we can't document it. We can just count the people that come in here. But increasing numbers of our clients are doubled up. And we see people just saying, "I don't want anything to do with their system." People say, "Too bad, I'll just live with my mother"; or "I'll just try to survive on this part-time job because I'm not going to deal with them." That would be a success for the state.

EIR: What is happening in Milwaukee County with W-2?

DeLessio: We have about 70% of the caseload now. We used to always run about 40-50% of the caseload in Wisconsin, which is bad enough. We're the largest city, we have a very significant minority population and the rest of the state is pretty much white and rural. I suspect in the other counties, they just told people there's no more welfare.

EIR: So, people moved to Milwaukee.

DeLessio: Well, it's just "go away." We also serve other counties. We're seeing in Kenosha, south of here, large numbers of people were just taken off the rolls as job-ready. I went to a couple of hearings this week in Kenosha County and that's clearly what's going on.

The state has no way to prove what it keeps saying. Now, we have clients who've had no means of support for a couple of months, who don't have jobs and who've been found not eligible for W-2.

Interview: Kelly Bablitch

Kelly Bablitch, policy analyst for Senator Moore, discussed the W-2 program with Marianna Wertz on Dec. 19.

EIR: What do you see as the problems that are arising now for the recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), as the welfare program is called?

Bablitch: There are a lot of problems that are arising. It's a new program and it's having a lot of trouble being implemented. We have 72 counties in Wisconsin and what we found out, when we did a case-by-case breakdown of where the money was going, Milwaukee gets the least amount of money

per case. We get \$23,175 per year, per case from the state. We have over 16,000 people on the rolls in Milwaukee. In Crawford County, there are two people that were on the AFDC caseload. They're getting, per case, over \$600,000 to get them off the rolls. And they have five caseworkers—two cases, five caseworkers, and over \$600,000. Obviously, in Crawford County, if you're unemployed, you're going to have a better chance of moving off the rolls, if you have five people helping you and \$600,000 to help you become job-ready and get some training.

EIR: So you have over 16,000 people in Milwaukee County. How many of them have actually found jobs?

Bablitch: We don't know. We don't have an evaluation of the program. A large number of people have dropped off the rolls. But where they go, and if they find jobs, we don't know. We herald Wisconsin performance because we've seen a mass reduction in the caseload. But, does that mean that they're in good jobs? No. Does that mean that they're in homeless shelters? Maybe.

EIR: There's no money to track what's happening to them?

Bablitch: There's money to track what's happening, but it's done by the state. They refuse to have something Gwen Moore had fought for very hard, which was to have a good evaluation of the program, to be conducted by an independent third party, and to ask questions like: Do we see a result in homelessness, in the increased use of shelters, as a result of W-2? That is not being done.

We have definitely seen an increase in the use of homeless shelters and in food pantries as a result of W-2 in Milwaukee County. There is definitely an increased need for it. Can you make the assumption that it's a result of W-2? Most of the homeless shelters and most of the people who operate the food pantries say yes.

EIR: What is Senator Moore proposing to do, or what can be done?

Bablitch: Gwen has fought very hard on the forefront, to help their reform work, as she says, making sure that there's things like education, wage-paying jobs versus grant-paying jobs, so you get the benefits of working, Earned Income Tax credit, and we have a state homestead tax credit. We have a Republican administration. We have a Republican Assembly. We have a very slim majority in the State Senate. We just finished our biennial budget proposal. We had a great package and we had to ditch it all. We got a couple things in the final bipartisan version of the budget, both the Assembly and the Senate voted to pass it, by overwhelming majorities, with 70 votes in the Senate out of 99. The Governor vetoed all the provisions that were there to improve W-2, except to increase the grant levels to minimum wage. Legislatively, there's not a lot we can do at this point, until, unfortunately, a tragedy occurs.