

Heroes or Victims



It's time to elect those who will get out of the way when it comes to commerce

COLUMN BY BOB BENNETT | ILLUSTRATION BY NOLI NOVAK

The 57th presidential election is November 6. In just a few weeks, all qualified citizens who decide to will vote to elect local officials, state/federal representatives and senators as well as the president of this republic of the United States of America.

Every election, we hear candidates vowing to fight for our rights, for family values, the American dream, fairness, fight for their districts, city, state, country, etc. Fight, fight, fight! Can't we just get along and work together for America and its citizens?

In 1964, the president elect declared to fight the "War on Poverty," even though the poverty level had dropped every year since the end of WWII. Our government's "Great Society" programs stopped the declining poverty level at 12.2 percent in 1969 and it has waffled at that and higher since then. In 2007, the poverty level was 12.5 percent but was estimated at 15.7 percent in 2011, the highest since 1965.

This is the longest and most costly "war" ever declared by the United States. It also is the only one declared against a concept or arbitrary status as opposed to an attacking enemy. It's the only war where 100 percent of the casualties are the American citizens, taxpayers and the poor who became victims of "The Great Society" programs.

According to Michael D. Tanner of the Cato Institute, the federal government has spent \$15 trillion fighting the "War on Poverty" since 1964. His research found there are 126 separate

federal programs that are conducting the "war." Many of them overlap, and waste is rampant. Cato Institute research also found that 70 cents of every dollar goes not to poor victims but to government bureaucrats and others who serve the poor. The government has investigated charitable organizations with inefficiencies like that, and some executives have been sent to prison or fined. Why aren't government bureaucrats held to the same standards?

This is the longest and most costly 'war' ever declared by the United States. It also is the only one declared against a concept or arbitrary status as opposed to an attacking enemy.

This 48-year "war" is the most expensive "war" of all time, and our citizens are numb to it. However, year after year, those politicians "fighting for us" demand more and more of our taxes to carry on this "war" because it is "fair." Is it fair to hang a \$15 trillion debt/noose around the necks of every tax-paying citizen?

Dr. Mark Perry of the University of Michigan did research that found that the world poverty rates from 1970 to 2006 decreased by 80 percent, mostly attributed to globalization and market-based reforms in China and India. The real sting of this "war" is that while our politicians were spending trillions that appear to have had little effect on

poverty in the U.S., the rest of the world used commerce to reduce poverty.

Do American citizens really need assistance from the government, or do they just need opportunity? I know a man, E.J., from the Ozark hills in southeast Missouri. He was somewhat of an entrepreneur. At various times he was a shoe cobbler, a blacksmith, welder, electrician, logger, and he even built three fully operational sawmills by hand. The remarkable aspect of these accomplishments was that E.J. had only a fifth-grade education. Even during the hardest of times, he never accepted any assistance that he could not pay back. He and his wife raised seven children. To this day, I have never heard of any of them being in prison or accused of tax cheating. I knew this family well because, when I was 12, I worked in one of E.J. Bennett's sawmills and, at the age of 16, I drove his log truck. I don't think my father ever earned more than \$5,000 after taxes and expenses in any year of his life, but with his values he would never take any money he did

not earn. In recent years I have elevated him to hero status in my mind. He lived a rich life because of his values and he never considered himself a victim because he was considered financially poor.

The people we elect need to get out of the way and release the restrictions that choke the life out of commerce and subjugate the poor. Let the people have the opportunity to restore this beautiful country of ours back to where it was and better, before the career politicians, "fighting" so hard, damage it beyond recovery.

This election, let's vote to help our citizens become heroes again and end the victimization of all the American people. **KCB**