

SOCIAL SPENDING

57% of Americans overall disapprove of the Republican Party's image. The most common criticisms are that the party is dishonest, greedy, racist, and corrupt. It is also widely seen as the party that prioritizes corporations and the wealthy over the poor. Much of that perception stems from Republican policies and rhetoric surrounding government social services. This is a complicated issue, and it deserves a more serious and thoughtful discussion.

While I would agree that there is at least some merit to the criticisms of dishonesty and corruption (criticisms that, to be fair, are often equally applicable to Democrats), I do not believe the other accusations are justified or accurately reflect Republican values. At the same time, I do not think these perceptions are simply the result of successful Democrat propaganda. Democrats may repeat and amplify those narratives, but many Americans are also forming these views based on the daily actions, tone, and messaging of Republican politicians themselves.

At its core, the Republican Party is often branded as greedy and racist because our messaging is built around a philosophy that is only **half right**. That philosophy is that government should not be heavily involved in social spending. There is real merit in that belief. It aligns with one of our strongest and most effective arguments: government is the most inefficient, ineffective, and expensive solution to any situation. The problem is not the philosophy itself. The problem is how we communicate it.

When Republicans talk about social spending, too often the message is simply: **cut, cut, cut**. Eliminate this. Downsize that. Reduce this budget. Divert those funds. We are excellent at talking about saving taxpayer money, but we often sound as if we are willing to throw struggling Americans to the wolves. That is where the perception of greed comes from.

The accusation of racism is more complicated and often rooted in misconception. Many Americans assume that Black and Hispanic communities receive the majority of government social benefits, when in reality White Americans make up the largest share of recipients. But whether that perception is accurate or not, it still shapes public opinion. When people hear "cuts to social spending," many automatically assume those cuts will disproportionately harm minorities. That perception must be addressed, but not in a defensive or dismissive way.

To fix this, I do **not** recommend that Republicans simply argue over racial statistics. That can be easily turned against us with a response like, "*So you are just as cruel to poor White people as you are to everyone else.*" That is not a winning message. Instead, we need to completely reframe how we talk about the issue.

Our messaging should focus on the same three core arguments Republicans already believe about government:

- **Ineffective**
- **Inefficient**
- **More costly**

Instead of saying, “**We want to cut social spending,**” we should say:

“We want to provide the most effective, efficient, and least costly way to get resources to the people who truly need them.”

That single shift changes the entire political narrative. Suddenly, Republicans are no longer framed as heartless. Instead, Democrats become the ones defending waste, bureaucracy, corruption, and systems that fail the very people they claim to care about. If our argument is that the current system is bloated, ineffective, and riddled with fraud, then the question becomes: **why are Democrats defending a broken system?**

We have already seen examples of how Democrat-aligned NGOs and politically connected organizations can become vehicles for waste, patronage, and self-enrichment. That gives Republicans a real opportunity—but only if we present ourselves as reformers who want better solutions for those that need help, not simply cutting government spending.

The First Problem: Nobody Really Knows Where the Money Is Going

The first and most urgent concern with social spending is this: **we are spending enormous amounts of money, yet we still do not clearly know who is receiving the benefits, how much they are receiving, and how much is being lost in the process.** The system has become so large and so fragmented that it is practically unmanageable.

Whether that dysfunction exists because of deliberate fraud or simple bureaucratic incompetence, the end result is the same: too much money is being absorbed before it reaches the people it was intended to help.

Various studies suggest that recipients may receive anywhere from **18% to 50%** of the total funds allocated. The exact number depends on who is doing the study. Conservative estimates are generally lower, liberal estimates higher. But even if you use the most generous numbers, you are still admitting that **half or more of taxpayer dollars are going somewhere other than the person in need.**

That money is overwhelmingly going to bureaucracies, administrative structures, consultants, staff, and intermediary organizations (that is assuming that it is not being diverted to Democrat fundraising). And unlike struggling families, those groups are not likely to generate much public sympathy if Republicans argue that they should be removed from the process.

The Second Problem: Republicans Must Show That We Actually Care

If Republicans want to win this issue, we must stop sounding like accountants and start sounding like leaders.

We need to make it unmistakably clear that we **do care about people in need**—and not in some vague, political, checkbox way. We need to show that we care in concrete, measurable, and morally serious ways.

First, we should emphasize that our goal is to ensure that **more of the money intended for struggling Americans actually reaches them**. That is both compassionate and fiscally responsible. For example, if charitable organizations are often expected to keep administrative costs around 10%, why should government social programs be allowed to consume 50% or more in internal overhead? If charities can be held to that standard, why can't the government?

In fact, Republicans could credibly argue for a system that **increases aid to the needy while also reducing costs to taxpayers**. If we eliminate unnecessary layers of bureaucracy and middlemen, we could potentially increase direct benefits by 20% while also reducing waste by 20% or more.

But we should go even further. We should not just say we want to make welfare cheaper. We should say:

“We do not want to fund poverty. We want to end it.”

That is a far more powerful and morally compelling position.

We understand that poverty will never be eliminated entirely. But millions of Americans could be moved out of it. More than **40 million Americans** live at or below the poverty line. What if Republican reforms could reduce that by 25%? Or even 50% over time? That would mean **10 to 20 million people** living better, more stable, more dignified lives.

That should be our objective.

The Republican position should be that every American in need should have access to the essential resources required for a decent life: shelter, food, healthcare, safety, and the basic conditions for human wellbeing. Not just enough to barely survive, but enough to stabilize, recover, and move forward.

That does **not** mean creating a permanent welfare state. It means creating a system that helps people recover and become productive, independent, and self-sufficient whenever possible.

That means investing in what actually helps people get out of poverty:

- mental health care
- drug rehabilitation
- child care assistance
- family counseling
- job training
- employment pathways
- transitional support systems

The goal is not to trap people in dependence. The goal is to **move people from crisis to stability, and from stability to independence.**

If someone is healthy and able to work, the system should be designed to help them reenter productive society—not simply keep them parked in long-term dependency. But just as importantly, Republicans should never appear to support **suffering as a motivational tool**. There is no real evidence that making people miserable helps them improve their lives. In fact, it often worsens crime, addiction, depression, family instability, and hopelessness.

The balance is this: we should not make welfare easy to stay on indefinitely, but if someone genuinely needs help, they should receive enough support to live with dignity while they get back on their feet.

The Conservative Messaging Problem

This is where things get politically difficult.

To make this argument effectively, Republicans must first confront some of our own long-held assumptions.

The “cut government spending” mantra is rooted in two powerful ideological traditions: **capitalism** and **libertarianism**. Both are based on an important moral principle: people should have the right to keep and control the fruits of their own labor. That principle has real merit.

But when applied too rigidly to social spending, it becomes politically unworkable and, in many cases, morally incomplete.

First: Taxes Are Not Theft

This is one of the most self-defeating slogans on the Right.

Taxes are not theft. That is unserious, anarchist rhetoric, and Republicans should stop repeating it.

A functioning society requires shared contribution. Taxes are, in many ways, a **membership fee for civilization**. A sustainable society will need infrastructure (roads, courts, first responders, etc.) to exist. Government is an essential part of society and serves a purpose. As such, taxes form the membership fee that each person who lives and benefits from the productivity of the society in general should be required to pay. If you don't want to pay the fee, then leave. However, if you are going to enjoy the privileges of the society, it has the right to request fees for that and government is the fairest and most honest way of extracting those fees.

Now, **excessive taxation** can absolutely become exploitative. When government takes far more than is reasonably necessary, that is abuse and that can be considered theft. But the existence of taxes in and of themselves is not immoral. In fact, most Americans would have no issue paying reasonable taxes if they believed the system was fair, efficient, and genuinely beneficial.

The real Republican argument should not be **"taxes are theft."** It should be:

"Taxes should be reasonable, transparent, and used effectively for the benefit of society—not wasted, stolen, or weaponized. They should be the extracted in such a way to have the least amount of impact on the citizens as possible."

That is a far stronger and more defensible position.

Second: The Old Libertarian Answer Has Not Worked

The hard truth is this: **our modern system, flawed as it is, still provides more support to the poor than the systems that existed before it.**

Yes, it is expensive.

Yes, it is corruptible.

Yes, it is abused.

But we also have to admit that purely voluntary or market-based systems have historically failed to adequately care for the poor, especially at scale.

Human beings do not consistently and collectively take care of the vulnerable unless there is some structure that compels or organizes it. History has shown that clearly. Without systems in place, the poor are too often ignored, hidden away, or left to fend for themselves in conditions most Americans would find unacceptable. We are good at taking care of our ourselves, our immediate friends and families, and even will address wrongs that we can see. We are horrible of taking care of everyone and everything else. "Out of sight, out of mind" creates outcomes that cause suffering to many people in the world.

That is why the Republican message cannot simply be, **"Get government out of it and everything will sort itself out."** That is not a serious transition plan. It is a slogan, not a governing philosophy.

Third: You Cannot Dismantle a 100-Year System Overnight

This may be the most important political reality Republicans fail to accept.

America has spent over a century building a government-centered social support system. Every living American has grown up in that environment. Whether they like it or not, it is what they know.

So, when Republicans talk as if they can just shut the system off overnight and everything will be fine, the public understandably rejects it.

This is the “ON/OFF switch” problem in conservative politics. We talk as if government involvement can simply be switched from **ON** to **OFF** in one election cycle. That is not how deeply embedded systems work.

We should not be talking about on/off switches. We should be talking about **dimmer switches**.

If Republicans want to move the country from a heavily government-managed model toward a more decentralized, market-driven, community-based system, then we need a serious transition plan. That means gradually reducing dependency, gradually increasing accountability, gradually shifting responsibility, and gradually rebuilding a culture of civil society and voluntary support.

That may take decades. And that is okay.

It took over 100 years to build the current system. It may take 50 to 75 years to responsibly unwind and replace it. That is not compromise. That is realism.

Force creates speed—but often at the cost of justice and stability.
Persuasion protects liberty—but it takes time.

And when you are dealing with systems so deeply woven into American life, sudden removal would not create freedom. It would create collapse.

A Republican Transition Plan

If Republicans truly want to move the country toward a more effective and less government-dependent model, then the transition must happen in phases.

Phase 1: Eliminate Fraud and Abuse

Start where the public is most likely to agree.

Use DOGE—or any serious oversight mechanism—to identify fraud, waste, misappropriation, and abuse. If a program is intended to feed the poor, provide shelter, or deliver healthcare, then that function should continue. But every contractor, agency, NGO, and intermediary should be required to prove that funds are being used as intended.

The first step is not to eliminate help.
The first step is to eliminate **theft, waste, and corruption**.

That is a politically defensible place to begin.

Phase 2: Shift Delivery Away from Bureaucracy

Once waste is identified and controlled, the next step is to reduce dependence on bloated government administration and move service delivery toward organizations that can operate more directly and efficiently.

This will be controversial because NGOs have, in many cases, become vehicles for political patronage and abuse. But that does not mean the NGO model itself is invalid. It means it has been corrupted. Our kneejerk reaction to Democrat abuse and fraud is to completely go in the opposite direction and eliminate everything associated with the socialist program. NGOs are very good tools to use to get to our goals, they just need to have the proper accountability and oversight. Used correctly, they provide the best vehicle for resolving social issues.

So, the answer is not to abandon the concept. The answer is to regulate it properly.

Any NGO receiving public funds should be subject to:

- full financial transparency
- document disclosure
- regular audits including surprise audits and spot checks
- performance reporting
- public accountability
- citizen access through FOIA-style transparency standards

If taxpayer money is involved, secrecy should not be tolerated. Period.

Phase 3: Make Providers Compete

No organization should be permanently funded simply because it exists.

Any organization receiving government-backed funding to address a social problem should be required to compete based on **results**. That means organizations must demonstrate how they will improve outcomes, reduce dependency, and solve the problem more effectively than their peers.

One possible model would be to select several organizations across comparable regions or populations and allow them to compete over a fixed evaluation period—perhaps one to three years. At the end of that period, the best-performing model is expanded and the others are discontinued.

Most importantly, funding should be structured to reward **problem-solving**, not perpetual maintenance.

In other words, organizations should be incentivized to **reduce poverty, reduce homelessness, reduce dependency, and reduce social dysfunction**—not merely manage those conditions forever in exchange for continued funding.

That changes the entire incentive structure.

Phase 4: Give Citizens More Say in Where Their Money Goes

Eventually, Republicans should move toward a system where taxpayers have more influence over how a portion of social spending is directed.

People should still be required to contribute their fair share. But within that framework, citizens could be given meaningful options to direct some of those funds toward approved causes, providers, or models they believe are most effective.

This is essentially a **School Choice-style principle applied more broadly**: if public money is being spent in your name, then you should have more input into where it goes and what kind of solutions it supports.

That would create a far more participatory and accountable system.

Phase 5: Rebuild a Culture of Voluntary Civic Responsibility

Long-term, the real goal should not merely be policy reform. It should be **cultural reform**.

Over time, Americans should be encouraged to see helping one another not as a burden imposed by the state, but as part of responsible citizenship. Businesses, schools, communities, and institutions should reward and normalize civic contribution, philanthropy, and local problem-solving.

If we can rebuild a culture in which people genuinely value helping their communities, then one day we may be able to transition to a model that even libertarians would admire: one based primarily on **voluntary participation rather than coercion**.

But that kind of society cannot simply be declared into existence. It has to be built.

The Political Opportunity

This entire framework ties directly into one of the strongest Republican talking points about government:

Government is too inefficient, too expensive, and too ineffective to be trusted with solving major social problems.

But instead of using that argument to justify abandonment, Republicans should use it to justify **better solutions.**

That is how we win this issue.

We tell the American people:

- The current system is not getting enough help to the people who need it.
- Too much of the money is being diverted, wasted, mismanaged, or stolen.
- Republicans want to fix that.
- Republicans want more help to reach the needy, more efficiently, and at lower cost.
- Republicans want to solve the problem—not just fund it forever.

That is a winning message.

It flips the moral perception of the issue. Suddenly, the “bad guys” are no longer the people calling for reform. The bad guys are the ones defending systems that waste money, trap people in dependency, enrich insiders, and still fail to provide basic dignity.

An easy way to prove our point is to ask, “Why are food banks still necessary in a country that already spends **billions upon billions** on social welfare programs?”. That is a powerful and simple question. If the system is working effectively, why do so many gaps still exist?

That is where Republicans should press the case:

“If we are spending this much money, why are people still not getting enough?”

That question resonates.

And the answer should be:

“Because the current system is built to sustain itself—not solve the problem.”

Republicans should be the party that says:

- **We want more money to reach the needy.**
- **We want less waste and corruption.**
- **We want programs that actually work.**
- **We want to help people become stable, productive, and independent.**
- **We want to solve the problem, not preserve it.**

That is a message that can work for virtually **any** social spending issue.

Final Political Thought

And one final point: imagine taking this message directly into Black, Hispanic, and lower-income communities.

Many of those voters are already drifting away from Democrats because they increasingly feel Democrats no longer represent their moral, spiritual, or cultural values. If Republicans also become the party that can credibly say:

“We care about helping your family more effectively, more honestly, and with better results,”

Now that would be politically explosive and that is how you change the map.