

# States Pass Bills Mandating Drug Testing for Welfare Recipients

Tara Dodrii/Wed Feb 16, 5:33 pm ET

Employers requiring the staff to undergo a drug test is not a new concept in America. The issue is not controversial and has become an accepted way of life for wage earners. In contrast, bills requiring welfare recipients to take a drug test to continue receiving a check at tax payer expense have become hotly contested in state legislatures.

## Missouri

The Missouri legislature introduced a bill that requires welfare recipients take a drug test before being handed a government check. The proposed law has passed the state House of Representatives but has yet to be addressed in the state senate. Supporters and opponents of the law fall pretty squarely along party lines. While Republicans want to review the projected costs associated with mandating drug tests for welfare recipients, most favor the measure.

## West Virginia

West Virginia lawmakers are also considering a similar measure to require recipients of government assistance be drug-free. If the bill becomes law, you will have to pass a drug test to be handed food stamps, unemployment benefits or a welfare check in the state. "Nobody's being forced into these assistance programs. If so many jobs require drug tests these days, why not these benefits," Republican Congressman Craig Blair told Fox News.

## Kansas

The Kansas House of Representatives approved a bill making rug tests mandatory for the 14,000 people receiving government assistance in the state. The measure will face Senate scrutiny before it can be enacted. During the 1990s, the U.S. Congress overhauled the welfare system and permitted individual states to mandate drug testing before handing over taxpayer dollars to recipients of government assistance. Although there is no coordinated alliance between states to suddenly begin pushing for drug testing laws, the list of states with pending bills grows each week.

## Kentucky

Republican Kentucky State Representative Lonnie Napier proposed a bill that would require recipients of government assistance checks and food stamps to pass a drug test. Democratic House Speaker Greg Stumbo is supporting the initiative, even though critics say it would stigmatize welfare recipients.

## Illinois

Republican Representative Jim Sacia from Illinois introduced a bill which called for a pilot drug testing program for recipients of Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) under the supervision of the

Department of Human Services. If the bill passes a program will be enacted in three counties and will grow to statewide usage if successful. New York, Oklahoma, Hawaii and Idaho also have similar pending legislation.

### **What About the Children?**

Opponents of the bills in all states where the issue is pending share a similar concern -- what happens to the children? The question is a valid one. If a parent doesn't pass a drug test they will not be able to receive a government handout until they can prove they are drug-free. If children are living in a home with drug abuse and parents who are not responsible enough to place the care of children above the desire to hit a crack pipe; shouldn't they be removed from the dangerous situation? The question of what to do about the children will likely be seriously considered and debated as the state bills move forward.

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/ac/20110216/us\\_ac/7874532\\_states\\_pass\\_bills\\_mandating\\_drug\\_testing\\_for\\_welfare\\_recipients/print](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ac/20110216/us_ac/7874532_states_pass_bills_mandating_drug_testing_for_welfare_recipients/print)