

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to the law as it existed prior to this session of the General Assembly.

1 State of Arkansas  
2 87th General Assembly  
3 Regular Session, 2009  
4

# A Bill

SENATE BILL 470

5 By: Senator Elliott  
6 By: Representative Rainey  
7

## For An Act To Be Entitled

10 AN ACT TO CREATE A LEGISLATIVE TASKFORCE ON  
11 REDUCING POVERTY AND PROMOTING ECONOMIC  
12 OPPORTUNITY; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.  
13

## Subtitle

15 AN ACT TO CREATE A LEGISLATIVE TASKFORCE  
16 ON REDUCING POVERTY AND PROMOTING  
17 ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY.  
18  
19

20 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:  
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### SECTION 1. Findings.

23 The General Assembly finds that:

24 (1) The State of Arkansas has one of the highest child and  
25 overall poverty rates in the United States;

26 (2) Children and families who live in poverty are subject to a  
27 number of harsh realities that include without limitation:

28 (A) Lacking the basic necessities of life;

29 (B) Poorer educational outcomes such as dropping out of  
30 school before obtaining a high school degree;

31 (C) Poorer health outcomes;

32 (D) Reduced likelihood of employment;

33 (E) Lower earnings; and

34 (F) A greater likelihood of dying earlier in life;

35 (3) The State of Arkansas recognizes the moral and economic  
36 interest in reducing child and family poverty, and the potential impact of



1 reducing poverty on the well-being of its children, families, and local  
 2 communities; and

3 (4) The State of Arkansas needs to develop innovative strategies  
 4 and a roadmap for reducing poverty and promoting economic opportunity for its  
 5 most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and families.

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 7 SECTION 2. Arkansas Legislative Taskforce on Reducing Poverty and  
 8 Promoting Economic Opportunity -- Creation -- Membership.

9 (a) There is created the "Arkansas Legislative Taskforce on Reducing  
 10 Poverty and Promoting Economic Opportunity" to consist of twenty-two (22)  
 11 members as follows:

12 (1) Seven (7) members appointed by the Speaker of the House of  
 13 Representatives as follows:

14 (A) Two (2) members of the House of Representatives;

15 (B) Two (2) members of the business community or economic  
 16 development organizations;

17 (C) One (1) member of a faith-based organization;

18 (D) One (1) member who is an individual living at or near  
 19 poverty; and

20 (E) One (1) member who is a city or county government  
 21 official;

22 (2) Seven (7) members appointed by the President Pro Tempore of  
 23 the Senate as follows:

24 (A) Two (2) members of the Senate;

25 (B) Two (2) members of the business community or economic  
 26 development organizations;

27 (C) One (1) member of a faith-based organization;

28 (D) One (1) member who is an individual living in or near  
 29 poverty; and

30 (E) One (1) member who is a city or county government  
 31 official;

32 (3) One (1) member to represent Arkansas Advocates for Children  
 33 & Families;

34 (4) One (1) member to represent the Southern Good Faith Fund;

35 (5) One (1) member to represent the Arkansas Public Policy  
 36 Panel;

- 1                   (6) One (1) member to represent the labor community;
- 2                   (7) One (1) member to represent the Arkansas Hunger Relief
- 3 Alliance;
- 4                   (8) One (1) member to represent the Arkansas Association of
- 5 Community Action Agencies;
- 6                   (9) One (1) member to represent Arkansas Association of
- 7 Community Organizations for Reform Now; and
- 8                   (10) One (1) member to represent a local community development
- 9 corporation.
- 10                  (b) The taskforce shall hold its first meeting no later than sixty
- 11 (60) days after the adjournment of the regular session of the General
- 12 Assembly.
- 13                  (c) The members of the task force shall elect a chair.
- 14                  (d) A majority of a quorum is necessary for the transaction of
- 15 business.
- 16                  (e) If any vacancy occurs on the task force, the vacancy shall be
- 17 filled by the same process as the original appointment.
- 18                  (h) The Bureau of Legislative Research shall provide staff for the
- 19 task force.

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21                  SECTION 3. Arkansas Legislative Taskforce on Reducing Poverty and

22 Promoting Economic Opportunity -- Powers and duties.

23                  The Arkansas Legislative Taskforce on Reducing Poverty and Promoting

24 Economic Opportunity shall:

- 25                   (1) Identify the number of individuals living at or near the
- 26 poverty level in the state, and among certain subpopulations, including
- 27 without limitation:
  - 28                   (A) Children;
  - 29                   (B) Households headed by single parents;
  - 30                   (C) The elderly; and
  - 31                   (D) Racial and ethnic minorities;
- 32                   (2) Identify the risk factors and underlying causes of poverty
- 33 through consultation with experts, service providers, and individuals living
- 34 at or near poverty;
- 35                   (3) Examine the long-term effects of poverty on children,
- 36 adults, families, and communities;

1           (4) Analyze and identify the costs of poverty to families,  
 2 municipalities, and the state;

3           (5) Identify existing statewide public and private programs that  
 4 address poverty, especially child poverty, and any deficiencies in statewide  
 5 public and private programs;

6           (6) Identify and assess best practices, model programs, and  
 7 strategies that existing research has proven to reduce poverty, including  
 8 without limitation:

9                   (A) Low and middle income tax policies including a state  
 10 earned income tax credit;

11                   (B) Education and workforce development policies;

12                   (C) Asset development policies;

13                   (D) Community and economic development policies;

14                   (E) Citizen engagement strategies; and

15                   (F) Work supports such as child care and health care.

16           (7) Recommend public policy strategies and legislation that have  
 17 the potential to reduce poverty on a statewide or regional basis;

18           (8) Engage all state agencies to help determine the innovative  
 19 roles each state agency, both individually and in cooperation, can play in  
 20 the elimination of poverty;

21           (9) Explore the possible use of a Common Client Data base; and

22           (10) Establish measurable benchmarks for the elimination of  
 23 poverty in the state by setting percentage reductions in the number of people  
 24 living at or near poverty in the next five (5), ten (10), and twenty (20)  
 25 years.

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 27           SECTION 4. Submission of Final Report and Recommendations

28           The Arkansas Legislative Taskforce on Reducing Poverty and Promoting  
 29 Economic Opportunity shall submit its final report on “Recommendations for  
 30 Reducing Child and Family Poverty and Promoting Economic Opportunity” to the  
 31 Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the President Pro  
 32 Tempore of the Senate on or before November 1, 2010.

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 34           SECTION 5. Expiration.

35           The Arkansas Legislative Taskforce on Reducing Poverty and Promoting  
 36 Economic Opportunity shall expire on December 31, 2010.