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Drug Testing: Welfare cheats

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By: [TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF](#) | Richmond Times Dispatch
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Staunton Republican Richard Bell has introduced legislation (HB73) that would squander taxpayers' money on a flawed idea: testing welfare recipients for drug use.

Florida has already tried this. It found that the vast majority of those on public assistance — 98 percent — are clean. Then a federal judge blocked further testing as a possible violation of the constitutional ban on unreasonable searches. Where's the probable cause?

Just because you get money from the government doesn't mean the government should draw your blood. If that were the case, then far more Americans would merit scrutiny — everyone from college presidents whose salaries are paid in part by federal grants to little old ladies collecting Social Security.

That's the other big problem with Bell's measure. It singles out only those persons receiving individual welfare payments. But what about corporate welfare? Business honchos are not immune from drug abuse. If Virginia is going to demand drug testing in exchange for cash transfers, then perhaps corporate executives who stick out their hands should also roll up their sleeves.


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Richard Bell · Works at Virginia House of Delegates

First of all HB73 makes no mention of testing "blood" and drug testing is only done after raised suspicions in a screening (probable cause). The Florida bill had no screening component, and I believe that was the problem with it. Are you saying we should use taxpayer money to enable drug use in a percentage of recipients? I don't mind your criticism but please consider all the facts.

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Lisa Potter Zwecker · Sponsored Placement Provider and Office Manager, respectively at DePaul Community Resources and Wolfe Speech Therapy Plus

As a taxpayer, I would support this bill! If someone is abusing the system by using their welfare benefits to buy/use drugs, and therefore taking funding away from people/projects that really need it, then they need to lose those benefits. If drug testing will help alleviate the abuse problem then I say go for it!!! Furthermore, if someone has the ability to go out and find drugs then they should be able to go out and get a job and get off of welfare, anyway!

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