

Robert Rector

Robert Rector, a leading authority on poverty, welfare programs, and immigration in America for three decades, is The Heritage Foundation's Senior Research Fellow in the Center for Health and Welfare Policy. [Click here to see a complete list of Rector's publications.](#)

Dubbed the “intellectual godfather” of welfare reform, Rector concentrates on a range of related issues, including the collapse of the marriage culture, the breakdown of the family, and other social ills. He is a vocal proponent of removing welfare marriage penalties and marriage education in low-income communities.

Rector played a major role in crafting the 1996 federal welfare reform legislation, which, for the first time, required recipients to work or get job training in exchange for benefits. The reform proved highly successful in strengthening marriage, sharply reducing teen and non-marital births. It also greatly reduced child poverty and abortion.

Rector's impact on national policy includes the debate over how to fix America's broken immigration system—both today and the last time around. His current research on [the long-term fiscal costs to taxpayers](#) of granting amnesty to an estimated 11 million unlawful immigrants, as envisioned in the Senate's “comprehensive” immigration reform bill.

He holds a bachelor's degree from the College of William and Mary and a master's degree in Political Science from Johns Hopkins University.

He is the co-author of *America's Failed \$5.4 Trillion War on Poverty*, a comprehensive 1995 examination of U.S. welfare programs, and co-editor of *Steering the Elephant: How Washington Works* (1987).