Welfare in the United States is an issue that affects us all. In 2006, the federal government spent more than $477 billion on various programs intended to fight poverty. This number does not include money spent by state and local governments. The amount spent on welfare programs in a year is a number that everyone should know. To take this a step farther, since 1964, the government has used more than $9 trillion to fight poverty. The government has spent a very large sum of money yet the poverty rate has not decreased.

Everyone should know these numbers for two reasons. The first reason is that this number shows there is obviously a problem in our society. If $477 billion is needed in one year to fight poverty, then far too many people are struggling to survive. We need to reexamine the programs we have to address the issue of poverty and see what could be done to better solve the problem.

The second reason that this number is so important is because this shows the amount that taxpayers must contribute each year. People should realize how much money from their taxes is spent on these programs. If social welfare programs required fewer funds, people may not have to pay as much taxes and could use this money for other things. It is also possible that government spending would decrease.

One caution when looking at this number is that there is some fraud that goes into social welfare programs. The number could be skewed because there are some people who should not be receiving benefits but somehow find a way to receive aid. However,
there are also people in the United States who are eligible for various government programs who do not receive the benefits.

It is important for all of society to realize where their money is going. More importantly is the issue that there are that many people that need this assistance from the government. 37 million Americans live in poverty; another important number. $477 billion is a number that everyone should know because it signals a major problem in the United States.

Source: “More Welfare, More Poverty” by Michael D. Tanner
The CATO Institute