

# US President Lyndon B. Johnson: War on Poverty, 1964

The [War on Poverty](#) was the unofficial name for legislation introduced by U.S. President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) (1908 – 1973) during his State of the Union address on January 8, 1964 to address high levels of poverty in the US.

The transcript of which this video is a small extract can be downloaded from [the Miller Center website of the University of Virginia](#). The video is also from [the Miller Center, from its Youtube channel](#).

President Lyndon B. Johnson:

This administration today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America. I urge this Congress and all Americans to join with me in that effort.

It will not be a short or easy struggle, no single weapon or strategy will suffice, but we shall not rest until that war is won. The richest nation on earth can afford to win it. We cannot afford to lose it. One thousand dollars invested in salvaging an unemployable youth today can return \$40,000 or more in his lifetime.

Poverty is a national problem, requiring improved national organization and support. But this attack, to be effective, must also be organized at the state and the local level and must be supported and directed by state and local efforts.

For the war against poverty will not be won here in Washington. It must be won in the field, in every private home, in every public office, from the courthouse to the White House.

The program I shall propose will emphasize this cooperative approach to help that one-fifth of all American families with incomes too small to even meet their basic needs.

Our chief weapons in a more pinpointed attack will be better schools, and better health, and better homes, and better training, and better job opportunities to help more Americans, especially young Americans, escape from squalor and misery and unemployment rolls where other citizens help to carry them.