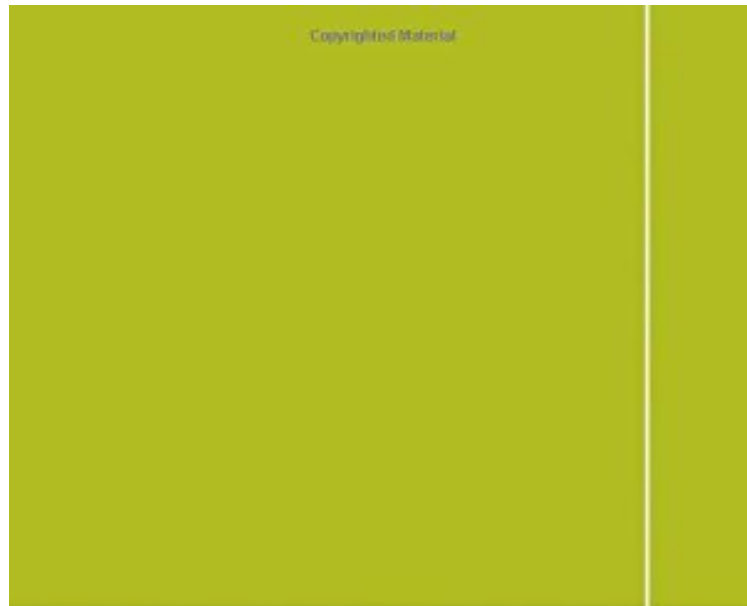


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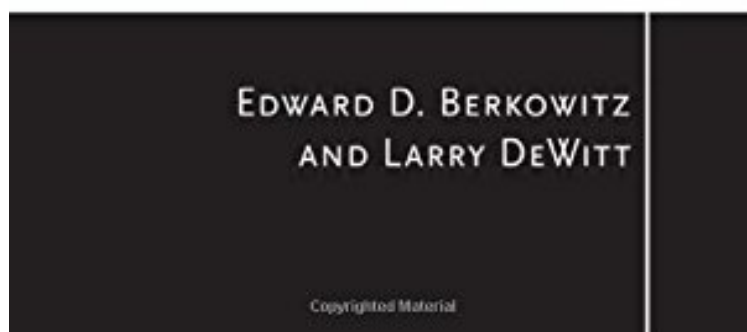
# The Other Welfare: Supplemental Security Income and U.S. Social Policy


*Edward D. Berkowitz, Larry DeWitt*  
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## THE OTHER WELFARE

*Supplemental Security Income  
and U.S. Social Policy*



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## Welfare: Supplemental Security Income and U.S. Social Policy:

The Other Welfare offers the first comprehensive history of Supplemental Security Income (SSI), from its origins as part of President Nixon's daring social reform efforts to its pivotal role in the politics of the Clinton administration. Enacted into law in 1972, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) marked the culmination of liberal social and economic policies that began during the New Deal. The new program provided cash benefits to needy elderly, blind, and disabled individuals. Because of the complex character of SSI marking both the high tide of the Great Society and the beginning of the retrenchment of the welfare state it provides the perfect subject for assessing the development of the American state in the late twentieth century. SSI was launched with the hope of freeing welfare programs from social and political stigma; it instead became a source of controversy almost from its very start. Intended as a program that paid uniform benefits across the nation, it ended up replicating many of the state-by-state differences that characterized the American welfare state. Begun as a program intended to provide income for the elderly, SSI evolved into a program that served people with disabilities, becoming a primary source of financial aid for the de-institutionalized mentally ill and a principal support for children with disabilities. Written by a leading historian of America's welfare state and the former chief historian of the Social Security Administration, *The Other Welfare* illuminates the course of modern social policy. Using documents previously unavailable to researchers, the authors delve into SSI's transformation from the idealistic intentions of its founders to the realities of its performance in America's highly splintered political system. In telling this important and overlooked history, this book alters the conventional wisdom about the development of American social welfare policy.

"This unusual book provides an in-depth history of the administration of the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program from its inception through 1996 and the Clinton administration. Berkowitz and DeWitt examine the pressures and compromises they witnessed from their respective professional positions. . . . The authors' proximity to the program enables them to report the details of political maneuvers and policy proposals few others could achieve." *Choice* (December 2013) "In their masterful historical account of Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Edward D. Berkowitz and Larry DeWitt argue convincingly that disability benefits policy, though little studied by historians and political scientists, is at the heart of contemporary debate over the proper scope of government and its capacity to do good.... Drawing from archival material not previously available, Berkowitz and DeWitt's *The Other Welfare* is a marvelous book and their inquiry a timely one. Reformers of the left and right, academics, and policy analysts would do well to heed its lessons as our nation, amid great public doubt, partisan rancor, and budgetary pressures, rolls out the Affordable Care Act, one of the most ambitious pieces of social legislation since SSI." Jennifer L. Erkul, *Journal of Children and Poverty* (September 2013) "Berkowitz and DeWitt offer an exceptionally fine history of SSI. Along with their descriptive project, Berkowitz and DeWitt offer a handful of historically informed lessons for SSI, including how the perceived 'deservedness' of program beneficiaries can profoundly affect how policies are understood and how they are 'reformed.'" Stephen Pimpare, *The Journal of American History*, (March 2014) "The Other Welfare is an excellent and insightful contribution to the study of federal and state interactions in social-welfare policy making and execution. In a few years its readers will want to return to it to trace the parallels between SSI and Obamacare." John E. Murray, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (2014) "Berkowitz and DeWitt's story of SSI illuminates not only the program's participants but also the largely uncharted territory of social policymaking after 'the high tide of the expansive welfare state of the postwar and Great Society eras.' Drawing on recent multidisciplinary scholarship on the state and American political development, they point to new structures and actors shaping social policy in an age of political conservatism, market ascendancy, congressional restructuring, and media saturation." Jennifer Mittelstadt, *The American Historical* (June 2014) "For those familiar with the SSI program, the details in the book will shed some needed light on the legislative wrangling that produced the program's cumbersome and often confusing structure. For those unfamiliar with SSI, the book is a well-documented reminder of the difficulties of efficiently and effectively managing federal income support programs across changing political and social environments." Mary C. Daly, *Journal of Economic Literature* (June 2014) "This well-researched and insightfully argued history of the SSI program tells us how and why SSI failed to reinvent welfare and illuminates our understanding of U.S. social policy in several fundamental ways along the way. It shows that welfare policy particularly in the U.S. political-cultural context of deserving and underserving poor is inherently fraught with controversy. . . . In this sense, it takes its place in the venerable tradition of American Political Development." Benjamin W. Veghte, *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* (September 2015) "The Other Welfare is a programmatic history of an often neglected but vitally important part of the American social safety net. Given the significance of SSI to the U.S. welfare state and its growth in an era otherwise marked by a rhetorical rejection of 'big government liberalism,' the program's history helps us better understand not only the strengths and limitations of the U.S. welfare state but also the general trajectory of American politics." Molly Michelmore, Washington and Lee

University, author of *Tax and Spend: The Welfare State, Tax Politics, and the Limits of American Liberalism* "Calling *The Other Welfare* one of the best histories of a U.S. social program would be true, but that would not be strong enough praise. This book offers readers a valuable window on the entire American welfare state during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The authors pay careful attention to all three branches of government, as well as developments at the state and local levels. Edward D. Berkowitz and Larry DeWitt take a relatively unknown social program and make its history seem absolutely central to the history of U.S. social policy." Christopher D. Howard, College of William Mary, author of *The Welfare State Nobody Knows: Debunking Myths about U.S. Social Policy*

About the Author Edward D. Berkowitz is Professor of History and Public Policy and Public Administration at George Washington University. He is the author of several books, including *Mass Appeal: The Formative Age of the Movies, Radio, and TV* and *Something Happened: A Political and Cultural Overview of the Seventies* as well as many books and articles on Social Security and the welfare state. Larry DeWitt is Former Public Historian, U.S. Social Security Administration, and coauthor with Edward D. Berkowitz and Daniel Beland of *Social Security: A Documentary History*.