

Editorial Page Editor
Chattanooga Times-Free Press
P.O. Box 1447
Chattanooga, Tn. 37401

The Poverty Index Needs to be Revised

According to the U. S. Census released in August, 2005, poverty is defined as:

\$19,307 - Family of 4
\$15,067 - Family of 3
\$12,334 - Family of 2
\$9,645 – One person

The population with the highest poverty rate is minority women; over 16% of Asian, African-American, and Hispanic elderly women live in poverty in our nation today. Federal programs such as Social Security and Medicare have helped to reduce poverty among older Americans, but the elderly poor will probably remain poor because of limited income in old age and decline in health; therefore, revisions need to be made.

The poverty line was established in 1963 when Mollie Orshansky of the Social Security administration created it as a baseline to determine the minimal diet necessary to survive. Having worked in social service agencies for the past several years, I have seen far too many people turned down for services because they have too much money according to the poverty index line. Please join me in contacting our representatives about this much needed revision.

Joan Benefield
UTC BSW Student