impoverished after so much effort, many Americans began to reconsider their support for government-funded assistance projects.

Ronald Reagan was elected president in 1980 on a platform of decreasing the federal government's role in social welfare and turning responsibility back to local entities, with the expectation that private groups would contribute social services as well. The return of control of social services from the federal to the local level was known as **devolution**. Its result was a diminished role for the federal government in antipoverty programs and increased variation among programs.

The most significant changes came during the 1990s with the movement for welfare reform. Welfare reform legislation passed in 1996 replaced the public assistance program called Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. AFDC, the primary cash support program for poor women and their children, had been established under the Social Security Act of 1935 (these changes are detailed in Chapter 3).

In general, the result of welfare reform in the 1990s was to limit the total number of years that a family can receive public assistance, place more stringent work requirements on parents, and devolve program control and design to states. These changes represent a strong retrenchment from federal responsibility for social welfare.

Values Reflecting the Retrenchment Years The values of the Elizabethan Poor Laws were evident in the social policies of the 1980s and 1990s. These policies reflected the belief that the family, not the public, should be primarily responsible for social care. External aid should be limited and should go to those who are most worthy, meaning those who cannot work for socially valid reasons.

Although earlier generations considered single women raising children alone to be worthy, primarily because their single parenthood was due to the death of a spouse, that attitude changed by the end of the twentieth century because recipients were generally unmarried mothers. In addition, changes in public policy during the 1980s and 1990s reflected the belief that state and local governments were better suited than the federal government to develop and control social services.

Social Welfare in the New Millennium: Terrorism, War, Financial Struggles, and Recovery

The new century opened with a defining event, the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the subsequent death of almost 3,000 Americans on American soil. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, led to a shift from the devolution of government social services. Although President George W. Bush had campaigned on a platform of devolution and privatization of social services, the destruction and loss of life drew the federal government deeply into the provision and funding of social services. The federal response included aid to individuals, cities, and even the airline industry. Military personnel were used to provide security and support. Airport security was transferred from the private sector to the federal government through the creation of the Transportation Security Administration. This response was clearly essential to recovery, but it was contrary to the position of moving away from the federal government's involvement in social welfare. The federal government became more central to social well-being rather than less so.

Efforts to deal with terrorism were cited as the reasons for the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the prolonged US military engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan. Through 2013, the cost of these efforts topped $3 trillion, more than 6,600 US military personnel died in the two war zones, and well over 300,000 Iraqi soldiers, militants, and innocent citizens—including women and children—had also lost their lives (Crawford, 2013).

Since the 2001 attack, the US economy has gone through two economic downturns, the recession of 2001 and the mortgage-related financial woes of 2007 and 2008. Economists and historians will debate the impact of the war for years to come, but the tremendous costs of war coupled with the economic downturn greatly impacted social welfare services and overall societal well-being. The impact of the economic downturn from 2007 through 2009 was significant. Referred to as the Great Recession, it was the largest economic downturn since the Great Depression. Between 2007 and 2009, income fell by 8.3 percent, the nation's gross domestic product declined, and unemployment increased from less than 5 percent to 9.3 percent, raising the cost of social services and increasing caseloads (Moffitt, 2013).

In response to the Great Recession, the federal government was involved in efforts to support the housing market and stimulate the economy. The Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP) was created to support companies and banks that were in critical financial condition. By 2013, more than $400 billion had been disbursed to help financial institutions, of which most had been repaid, leaving a total expenditure of about 21 billion (Congressional Budget Office, 2013). While slow, the economy began returning to former levels of economic stability. The rate of workers unemployed was over nine percent in 2009 and 2010, then dropped to an annual rate of 4.9 percent in 2016 and continued to drop in 2017 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). Although there have been economic improvements, the impact of the Great Recession was significant.

Growing inequality in income and wealth has been a concern of the post-recession years. Between 2009 and 2013, those already at the top 1 percent of wealth gained almost all the economic growth (95%), whereas the bottom 90 percent of people actually became poorer (Oxfam International, 2014). In the United States, the gap between the lowest earners and the highest earners grew from 2007 to 2015, with the top fifth of earners taking home half the household income while the lowest fifth shared in less than 4 percent of the income (Proctor, Semega, & Kollar, 2016). Lack of economic gains for the majority, particularly those who were already poor before the years of economic downturn, means that social welfare services are even more important than in the years before the Great Recession.

One area of social welfare that was a major focus in President Obama's first term was health care. In 2010, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act was signed into law. It was the first successful attempt at creating health care coverage for all those who were uninsured. Although most provisions were not slated to go into effect until 2014, the program was immediately met with significant resistance. The controversy reflected the historical divide between those who favor government intervention to secure social welfare for all and those who feel that individual and private efforts are better. The implementation of the Affordable Care Act was strengthened when the Supreme Court upheld its constitutionality in 2012. In regard to social welfare history, passage and implementation of the Act in 2014 represented a major shift in health care in the United States. However, opponents of the Affordable Care Act were intent on repealing the program, and with the election of Donald J. Trump as the 45th president of the United States, hopes were high that in 2017 the ACA would be repealed. The proposed replacement, the American Health Care Act was regarded as a "repeal and replace" bill that was assessed to save revenue but remove millions of people from the ACA health care insurance program. Estimates placed the change as a loss of health insurance for 24 million people over the first eight years, effectively erasing the gains made by the ACA in decreasing the numbers of people who had no health insurance (Congressional Budget Office, 2017).

The changes to health care were not the only efforts at shifting the role of the social welfare system that were initiated as a result of the change in presidency between Obama and Trump. Efforts focused on tightening immigration laws, rolling back funding for public agencies, and overall return of social welfare to states and away from the federal government. The devolution of the 1980s was back as the preferred policy plan.

Values Influencing the New Millennium Although we are only 20 years into the new century, events and policy decisions of these past 20 years will impact the country for decades to come. What will the effect on the social work profession be? Of course, the answers to these questions will take years to emerge. Historically, our nation has moved back and forth between periods of individual accountability and social responsibility (Schlesinger, 1986). The retrenchment years reflected a period of individual focus. If the cycle continues, the next cycle was characterized by social welfare policies and programs that reflect the values of social responsibility and social justice. Social welfare developments of the new millennium included some major social expansions such as health care coverage through the Affordable Care Act. However, efforts to repeal that program may bring an end to that social responsibility effort. The early years of this century were dominated by security concerns prompted by 9/11 and then followed by the war in Iraq. As a result of the billions of dollars spent on the war and the economic downturn, expanding government services and addressing economic inequality moved to the center of political struggle. Even with slow and steady economic growth through 2017, the problems of the economic downturn and the long-term impact of fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan still need to be addressed. And the efforts at

Box 2.2 Becoming a Change Agent

Historic and ongoing events can significantly impact the social well-being of individuals and communities. In March 2003, the United States initiated war in Iraq. It has involved hundreds of thousands of US soldiers directly and many more thousands of families and friends. Indirectly, it has involved all Americans. By the end of the war, over 6,000 soldiers had been killed and another 50,000 injured, many of them seriously and permanently.

Analyzing the Situation

Try to learn more about the impact of the Iraq war today. How do people on different sides of the situation explain what has happened? Has there been an impact on the social work profession? Has there been an increase in social service needs of veterans and their families?

What Can Social Workers Do?

Given your analysis, should social workers have taken a position about the war? Should they have gotten involved with the issue? Why or why not? What are some ways to express support or dissent? In keeping with the NASW Code of Ethics, what actions should social workers have taken in regard to the war?

What Can You Do?

Is there something you could have done close to home to make a difference?

moving social welfare back to state and local levels, although not a new trend, is still evolving and will likely take a different shape today than it did during the last strong effort at devolution 40 years ago. Major political and economic events influence social welfare and, in turn, social work practice. Chapter 14 addresses the impact of the trauma experienced by soldiers fighting in Iraq, and Chapter 9 outlines the changes in health care delivery as a result of the Affordable Care Act followed by the attempts at repeal. These are just two of the major events of the new century that have already greatly impacted social welfare and social work practice. The struggle between choosing social responsibility over individual responsibility for the provision of social services is likely to continue to dominate the political landscape (see Box 2.2).

EP 5a

Major Social Welfare Programs LO 4

Not every social problem is addressed in the same way, and therefore resources are distributed in different forms. Most social welfare programs use one of three forms of packaging and delivering assistance or benefits to those who need them: cash assistance, in-kind benefits, and entitlements.

Cash assistance is the provision of resources through financial transfers. Although most of us associate the word *welfare* with a check given to a needy person by the government, *cash assistance* is the correct term for the transfer of money from the government to a person in need. Cash assistance is typically provided after the level of financial need has been determined. On the basis of the level of a person or family's need, the number of people in the family, and the provisions of the program, a set amount is determined, and a monthly check is provided. Although the intent of cash assistance is to supply basic needs, the recipient determines exactly how to spend the money. Most cash assistance is provided through federal programs, although some states also have such programs.