

House Republicans' New Policy Agenda Isn't Really New At All

This week, Speaker Ryan and House Republicans are beginning to unveil piece of their policy platform, which they call “A Better Way.” The first plank of Speaker Ryan’s agenda is supposed to address poverty, but the plan is just another attempt to rebrand policies that House Republicans have put forward in the past and that we know won’t lift Americans out of poverty.

Their proposal includes:

- requiring Americans to find work in order to access assistance
- consolidating programs like nutrition assistance, housing assistance, and child care into block grants.

A few key takeaways:

- Their “new” agenda isn’t really new at all – they have only repackaged the same GOP proposals we’ve seen in the past.
- Ryan’s attempt to present a “better” vision than his presumptive Presidential nominee has resulted in more infighting among his Members and legislative paralysis.
- The ideas they have offered provide little detail and (no surprise) they won’t actually address poverty.

A look at this morning’s news shows the GOP plan is the #WrongWay to address poverty, and just better spin on the same old GOP ideas:

“Speaker Paul Ryan and House Republicans will roll out a new plan on Tuesday to fight poverty and help Americans move up the economic ladder, yet **much of this latest initiative is repackaged GOP proposals** likely to win only limited support from Democrats.” [Politico, [6/7/16](#)]

“Many of the **specific policy prescriptions aimed at addressing the problems identified in the paper were left out because members couldn’t agree on details** such as how to prevent waste and fraud, according to aides.” [Washington Post, [6/7/16](#)]

“House Republicans will release a report Tuesday that lays out their vision for fighting poverty, but **there’s little detail on how they would attempt to restructure existing anti-poverty programs to achieve their goals.**” [CQ, [6/7/16](#)]

While Speaker Ryan is using new rhetoric to describe these ideas, his conference has a long record of putting forward policies that would reduce opportunity and increase poverty in America. Here’s a look at just a few examples of how the GOP has voted to undermine anti-poverty programs over the past few years:

Health Care

- House Republicans have voted 63 times to repeal or undermine the Affordable Care Act, and have yet to propose an alternative.
 - Repealing the ACA would have severe consequences—the number of uninsured Americans would increase by 22 million in 2017 and the federal budget deficit would increase by \$137 billion over the next ten years. [Congressional Budget Office, [6/15/15](#)]
- House Republican budgets have attempted to end the Medicare guarantee, block grant Medicaid, and cut Children’s Health Insurance Program.
 - House Budget Committee Chairman Tom Price’s budget proposal to convert Medicaid into a block grant would have cut federal funding by \$913 billion over the next ten years, and would result in 14 million Americans losing their Medicaid coverage. [Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, [3/17/15](#)]

Nutrition Assistance

- House Republicans have repeatedly proposed legislation to cut the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for low-income families, 76% of which are households that include a child, senior citizen, or person with a disability.
 - As part of the 2013 Farm Bill debate, House Republicans passed a bill that cut SNAP by \$39 billion over a ten year period.
- A Republican proposal to reauthorize Child Nutrition and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) in 2016 would make it harder for low-income children to access school meal programs and could roll back important nutrition standards.
 - The Improving Child Nutrition and Education Act of 2016 would create more bureaucracy for school administrators and families, and in the process, eliminate free school meals at 7,000 schools. [Hunger Free America, [5/2/16](#)]

Education

- House Republican budgets proposed cutting funding for Pell Grants, a resource nearly eight million Americans depend on to attend and complete college.
 - While the maximum Pell Grant for 2017 will cover the smallest share of college costs in 40 years, Republican budgets have cut \$50 billion in grants. [[4/6/16](#)]
 - A college degree is no longer a luxury but a requirement for many jobs and is often the key to escaping a life of poverty. We should be investing more, not less, in those that are working to make a better life for themselves and their families.
- House Republicans have tried to cut funding to Head Start.
 - A Republican budget in 2011 tried to cut funding to Head Start, and would have caused 175,000 at-risk children under the age of 5 to lose access to education, healthcare and other Head Start services. [Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, [3/1/11](#)]
 - Early education is crucial to make sure kids don't fall behind educationally, and having a safe place to leave your child while you go to work is a key component in helping people stay in the workforce and remain productive members of society. Republican cuts to this program work against both of these objectives.
- The initial House Republican version of Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization included several provisions that undermine access to quality schools for low-income students who are the most at risk of dropping out or failing. It was opposed by a large number of stakeholders, including education organizations, children advocates, and the Chamber of Commerce.

Housing

- Instead of strengthening housing resources for low-income families, House Republicans consistently argue against the effectiveness of Tenant-Based Rental Assistance. Yet, it, along with Housing Choice Vouchers and Public Housing, assists 90% of the 5 million low-income households that use housing services.
- While the demand for rental housing has risen drastically over the last ten years, the number of families with children receiving federal rent subsidies has fallen by 13% since 2004. [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, [5/24/16](#)]
 - Following the 2013 sequestration funding cuts enacted by Republicans, local agencies cut the number of families supported by housing vouchers by 100,000. [Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, [3/25/15](#)]

House Democrats will continue to hold House Republicans accountable for their draconian policy proposals.

Office of Democratic Whip Steny H. Hoyer, 6/7/2016