

POVERTY REVISITED

REP. DAVIS BELIEVES POVERTY SHOULD BE ON THE AGENDA

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Forty seven years ago, President Lyndon B. Johnson declared in his State of the Union address, a legislative program titled the War on Poverty. During this time in 1964, the national poverty rate was nineteen percent and there was an expansion in government's role in social welfare programs. These programs included Vista, Job Corps, Head Start, legal Services and the Community Action Program among others. Many of these programs showed tremendous progress and pushed poverty into a decline for the next decade.

Presently, poverty is on the rise. According to the most recent numbers, poverty in the United States is 14.3 percent or 43.6 million people. While I represent some of the wealthiest people in our country, my congressional district has 24 percent of my constituents living in poverty. Certainly, there are a myriad of problems that continue to inhibit growth and opportunity in the poorer groups of society. According to the U.S. Census report, the wealthiest 20 percent of Americans received 49.4 percent of all income, compared to 3.4 percent combined for all Americans living in poverty, marking the greatest level of disparity since the U.S. Census Bureau began tracking household income in 1967.

In addition, 33.5 percent of African-Americans are in poverty nation-wide.

The recession has pushed the Nation's poverty rate to levels not seen in more than a decade, destroying gains made in the long-running War on Poverty and adding more financial instability to the lives of millions of Americans. With staggering unemployment rates, many exceeding even 20% in urban and very rural areas, we should take a realistic look at what a regressive budget will mean for these Americans.

In the next couple of weeks, the Republican Leadership plans to undertake a complete takeover of the federal budget, potentially putting at risk children and families in harm of spiraling further into poverty. Many of these families rely on basic social services to make it from month to month.

Many of the discussions in Congress continue to focus on tax credits for businesses, reducing the deficit, infrastructure spending, farm subsidies, renewable energy and many other reforms. While all these things have value to our union and our economy, I think some attention and discussion must be on the rapid increase of poverty in the US and the solutions that we can implement. Over the coming months, I will continue dialogue centered on poverty and what Congress can do to reduce and eliminate poverty and to help more of our citizens realize the American dream.