

Amendment to the Chairman's Mark

Offered by Representatives Lee, Van Hollen, Yarmuth, Pascrell, Moore,
McDermott, Pocan, and Dingell

National Strategy to Eradicate Poverty and Increase Opportunity

1. At the end of Title VI, add the following:

**“POLICY STATEMENT ON A NATIONAL STRATEGY TO ERADICATE
POVERTY AND INCREASE OPPORTUNITY**

(a) FINDINGS. — The House finds the following:

- (1) Access to opportunity should be the right of every American.
- (2) Poverty has declined by more than one-third since 1967. Federal programs and tax policies that strengthen economic security and increase opportunity have played an important role in this decline. Continued Federal support is essential to build on these gains.
- (3) Social Security has played a major role in reducing poverty. Without it, the poverty rate in 2014 would have been 8 percentage points higher. Its positive impact on older Americans is even starker, lowering the poverty rate among this group by nearly 40 percentage points.
- (4) The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program alone lifts nearly 5 million people out of poverty, including over 2 million children. School breakfast and lunch programs help keep children ready to learn, allowing them to reach their full potential.
- (5) Medicaid improves health, access to health care, and financial security. Medicaid coverage lowers infant, child, and adult mortality rates. Medicaid coverage virtually eliminates catastrophic out-of-pocket medical expenditures, providing much-needed financial security and peace of mind.
- (6) The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) together lift over 11 million people, including over 5 million children, out of poverty. President Ronald Reagan proposed the major EITC expansion in the 1986 Tax Reform Act, which he referred to as “the best antipoverty, the best pro-family, the best job creation measure to come out of Congress.” Studies indicate that children in families that receive the type of income supports EITC and CTC offer do better at school and have higher incomes as adults.

- (7) Antipoverty programs have increasingly been focused on encouraging and rewarding work for those who are able. The programs can empower their beneficiaries to rise to the middle class through job training, educational assistance, adequate nutrition, housing and health care.
- (8) Despite our progress, there is still work to be done. Nearly 50 million Americans still live below the poverty line. Parental income still has a major impact on children's income after they become adults.
- (9) There remain significant disparities across racial and ethnic lines. At the end of 2015, the unemployment rate for whites was 4.5 percent but was 6.3 percent for Hispanics and 8.3 percent for African Americans. The poverty rate among African Americans and Hispanics is more than that for whites. Disparities in wealth are even starker, with white households having nearly 13 times the median wealth of African American households and 10 times the median wealth of Hispanic households.
- (10) The minimum wage has not changed since 2007 and is worth less today than it was in real terms at the beginning of 1950. Raising the minimum wage could lift millions out of poverty.
- (11) Some areas of the country have been left behind. They face persistent high levels of poverty and joblessness. Residents of these areas often lack access to quality schools, affordable health care, and adequate job opportunities.
- (12) Those suffering from poverty are also more likely to live in America's most polluted neighborhoods. Exposure to pollutants can lead to chronic diseases and developmental deficits.

(b) **POLICY ON NATIONAL STRATEGY TO ERADICATE POVERTY AND INCREASE OPPORTUNITY.** — It is the policy of this resolution that Congress should support developing a national strategy to eliminate poverty, with the initial goal of cutting poverty in half in ten years, and to extend equitable access to economic opportunity to all Americans. The strategy must include a multi-pronged approach that would:

- (1) Ensure a livable wage for workers, including raising the minimum wage so that a full time worker earns enough to be above the poverty line.
- (2) Provide education and job training to make sure workers have the skills to succeed.
- (3) Provide supports for struggling families in difficult economic times and while developing skills.
- (4) Remove barriers and obstacles that prevent individuals from taking advantage of economic and educational opportunities. This should include responses to correct, mitigate, and prevent the negative impact of exposure to environmental risks.

- (5) Provide supports for the most vulnerable who are not able to work: seniors, the severely disabled, and children.

As the strategy is developed and implemented, Congress must work to protect low-income and middle-class Americans from the negative impacts of budget cuts on the critical domestic programs that help millions of struggling American families. The strategy should maximize the impact of antipoverty programs across Federal, state, and local governments. Improving coordination and oversight across agencies and levels of government and focusing on shared goals and client-based outcomes will help to streamline access, improve service delivery, and strengthen and extend the reach of every Federal dollar to fight poverty. The plan should consider additional targeting of spending toward persistent poverty areas to revitalize these areas of pervasive historical poverty, unemployment, and general distress. For example, the idea of setting a minimum funding requirement for persistent poverty areas in certain federal programs and accounts should be explored.”

2. Amend the committee report to reflect the following policy assumptions:

The resolution supports development of a national strategy to eliminate poverty and expand opportunity. The plan would be a multi-pronged approach that focuses on livable wages, building job skills, and removing barriers and obstacles to success, including environmental factors, while at the same time ensuring an adequate backstop in difficult economic times and for those most vulnerable. The strategy would provide a route for all Americans to take advantage of opportunities, move to join the middle class, and reach for the American Dream.