



Ryan anti-poverty plan seeks consensus, not reform

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Paul Ryan's anti-poverty plan continues to make headlines – and one expert calls it a good plan, but not good enough.

The House speaker's plan is part of a broader agenda for the next couple of years and essentially suggests that Republican goals should be set by Congress and not by the presidential candidate.

"The proposals that he makes are all steps in the right direction, but they're very small proposals," says Michael Tanner, senior fellow at the Cato Institute. "It's much more tinkering around the edges than it is fundamental reform."

In some ways, Tanner thinks Ryan is sort of pre-emptively recognizing that there may be Republican losses in the fall, possibly a loss of the Senate, and maybe not a Republican president in the White House. "And as such, [Ryan] has to rely on positions that are going to gather some bipartisan support," he explains.

"So some of the big ideas that he's had in the past – such as block granting social welfare programs and returning them to the states – those things are gone from this blueprint; and instead, it is largely a matter of cost-benefit analysis, of trying to make welfare programs more efficient, of demanding the use of metrics and measurement in terms of evaluating whether programs are successful."

Tanner says these are all things lawmakers should be doing, not just in welfare but throughout government.

Democrats, meanwhile, accuse the GOP's blueprint of being more about cutting anti-poverty programs than reforming them. Republicans have argued over the years that Democrats fail to attack poverty. Ryan mentioned that in his announcement of the anti-poverty plan.

"The problem we have had in government for too long is we think the way to fight poverty is to treat its symptoms – and when we treat the symptoms of poverty, we perpetuate poverty," Ryan stated. "We need to go at the root causes of poverty to break the cycle of poverty."