

# POLITICO

## Clinton, Ryan team up on anti-poverty plan

*A key to the bipartisan appeal? It will help millions of poor white voters who live in GOP-held districts as well as black voters in Democratic districts.*

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Hillary Clinton and Paul Ryan don't agree on much — but both are lending their support to an anti-poverty proposal that cuts across racial and party lines. The result: Billions of dollars could soon flow to some of the neediest neighborhoods, regardless of who triumphs in November.

While that may sound like the kind of Big-Government proposal Republicans typically hate, Clinton and the plan's creator, Rep. Jim Clyburn (D-S.C.), have found the key to bipartisan appeal: a funding formula that will help millions of poor white voters who live in GOP-held districts as well as African-American voters who live in Democratic districts.

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Speaker Ryan has effectively given his blessing, spurring the plan's inclusion in several of this year's bills to fund the government. Donald Trump, who recently began new outreach to minority voters, has yet to weigh in, effectively ceding the political benefit to his Democratic rival.

Clinton regularly mentions Clyburn's plan when addressing largely African-American audiences, most recently calling herself a "big fan" during a speech to a conference of black journalists this month. But she has also made clear she thinks it would be good for low-income people regardless of race.

"That is a program that would target a lot of places in America, not only inner city poverty but rural poverty, Indian country poverty, coal country poverty," Clinton said at a town hall meeting in March.

The math of the so-called 10-20-30 proposal is simple: At least 10 percent of a federal program's funds should go to counties where 20 percent of the population has lived below the poverty line for 30 years.

Nearly 500 counties across the United States suffer from the kind of persistent poverty that would make them eligible for the plan's targeted funding, Clyburn says — and it would give more Republican lawmakers something to brag about to constituents than Democrats. In 2009, Clyburn likes to note, 84 Republicans represented those counties, compared with 43 Democrats. The GOP held 311 counties and Democrats represented 149. (In terms of total population, the parties were more evenly split, with Republicans representing 8.3 million people from those counties and Democrats representing 8.8 million; another 14 counties with 5.3 million people were split between Republicans and Democrats.)

Perhaps for that reason, along with a new House speaker interested in chipping away at poverty, Clyburn has seen progress on Capitol Hill this year. Ryan met with the Congressional Black Caucus in February and signaled support for the plan, Clyburn said. Most importantly, Ryan encouraged House Appropriations Chairman Hal Rogers (R-Ky.) to work with Clyburn to turn the 10-20-30 plan into reality in this year's bills to fund the government.

Still, the GOP may tread cautiously, as not all on the right are enamored with the plan. Michael Tanner, a senior fellow at the libertarian Cato Institute who studies poverty, expressed concern with the proposal's "arbitrary" formula. Better targeting of anti-poverty funds is a good idea, he said, but the plan might not lead to the optimal use of taxpayer dollars. "You have the money, so you spend it," he said.

The plan got a major boost when Clinton decided to embrace it at the urging of Clyburn and other lawmakers in the CBC.

Clyburn, the third-highest-ranking House Democrat, is pleased the idea is finding a prominent stage. "Hillary Clinton has made it a central part of her campaign," he said in a phone interview.

Clinton brought it up in a BET interview in February and at the NAACP's annual convention in July, along with half a dozen other campaign appearances.

"I think it's a good way for her to commit to black voters and the black community," said Clyburn. "I'm looking for commitment."

Clyburn also is sure to emphasize the plan's race-neutral aspect, in a bid to build bipartisan backing. "If you're talking about poverty rates, then you're talking about white people in Kentucky and West Virginia," he said. "You're talking about Latinos in New Mexico and Arizona. You're talking about Native Americans in South Dakota and Alaska."

Rogers, who represents part of Kentucky's Appalachian region and a number of counties that would benefit, called ending poverty "a nonpartisan challenge" in a statement, adding, "The '10-20-30 plan' has the potential to provide much-needed relief to our rural communities that have suffered through three decades of generational poverty."

But Rogers also stressed that federal plans should be coupled with local efforts, in a sign that even supportive Republicans may be wary of getting too close to a proposal associated with liberal Democrats.

Ryan, too, has been largely mum on the plan in public, despite having given his tacit approval. “Speaker Ryan’s focus is on the House’s ‘Better Way’ agenda, including the poverty plank,” Ryan spokeswoman AshLee Strong said.

Clyburn first recommended including the funding formula in the 2009 economic recovery package. It was applied to a set of rural development programs run by the Agriculture Department and directed nearly \$1.7 billion to 4,655 economic development projects. Clyburn said the plan helped communities in his district replace contaminated wells with a new water system after decades of trying in vain to get funding.

This year, lawmakers and their aides sprinkled the formula throughout appropriations measures — touching 17 programs, including Agriculture Department support for rural housing and broadband services; Commerce Department public works programs; Department of Justice drug courts; the Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfield grant program to clean up contaminated properties; and the Treasury Department’s community development financial institutions program.

The 10-20-30 plan has a few big chances to be implemented in the coming months. Congress will soon decide how to keep the federal government open past Sept. 30, either through continuing resolutions that maintain current spending levels or through a sprawling omnibus appropriations bill. Clyburn said he will urge the formula’s adoption regardless of the route Congress takes.

The other opportunity is if Clinton is elected president and follows through on her \$275 billion infrastructure proposal. Clyburn said he would “absolutely” push for the plan’s inclusion in any major spending package next year.

Jared Bernstein, Vice President Joe Biden’s former chief economist and a senior fellow at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, said he hoped Clinton would include the 10-20-30 plan. “My experience is that you can’t assume public infrastructure jobs will go to the local folks who need them the most,” he said. “This is a positive idea in that it focuses poverty policy on getting the water to the fire.”