

PAUL RYAN PRESENTS:

A BETTER WAY

OUR VISION FOR A CONFIDENT AMERICA

SPEAKER RYAN, please make sure you see the last page analysis and your final grade...



The same old, ineffective way...

~~A Better Way to Fight Poverty~~

As reviewed by Sister Simone Campbell SSS

Our Principle

If the American Dream isn't true for everyone, then it isn't true at all. All of us should have the chance to make the most of our lives no matter where we start. *...says the party that will nominate Donald Trump for president!*
—Here, here! NETWORK's Nuns on the Bus agree! Pope Francis agrees! Catholic Social Justice agrees! Now about everything that follows...

Our Challenge

Our country is all about striving, but too many of our people are stuck. Over the years, Washington has made many promises, *Yup. Policies enacted since 1980 got us into this mess. Policies can get us out.* created many programs and spent many trillions to fight poverty. Yet today in America, if you are raised poor, you are just as likely to stay poor as you were 50 years ago.

Our Vision

No amount of government intervention—no matter how well-intentioned—can replace the great drivers of daily life: our talents and aspirations, our neighbors and loved ones, our communities and places of worship. We are all in this fight together, and we need an approach which reflects that *shared responsibility.*

We need to attack poverty right at its roots. Instead of starting with welfare, we start with work. Instead of expanding government, we expand opportunity. Instead of letting people languish, we get them on the ladder of opportunity and help them climb that ladder so they can make the most of their lives.

But here's the thing: we can't just make changes in Washington and hope things work out for the best. We have to open up the system. Open it up to accountability for taxpayers, and open it up to collaboration with the men and women on the front lines of this fight. That means we try new ideas, and then we test those ideas, abandoning what does not work so we can build on what does.

We don't have to settle for people trapped in poverty and deprivation. *There is a better way to fight poverty.*

Our Ideas

Reward work. If you are capable, we will expect you to work or prepare for work.

Tailor benefits to people's needs. We will match poverty-fighting programs with your needs so that it's easier for you to get back on your feet. **A decent paycheck!**

Improve skills and schools. We will make sure that poor kids have more opportunities to succeed at every stage, from childhood through college. *By ensuring you have a decent paycheck...*

Plan and save for the future. We will make it easier for you and your family to plan for the future and be retirement-ready.

Demand results. We will open up the system to accountability and collaboration, backing ideas that work on the front lines. *Same old talking point about accountability...*

that work WELL, like Medicaid, SNAP and EITC for example!

Agreed! We need a tax system that requires the wealthiest corporations to pay their fair share and keeps them from hiding it in overseas tax shelters, for starters.

If you would like to meet some of them, Speaker Ryan, we invited you once again to join the Nuns on the Bus this summer..

Which would require that they get paid enough to get out of poverty.

So why does this plan attack people living in poverty, rather than poverty?

Created by trickle-down economics, the exploitation of workers and politicians who supported those failed ideas

We'll note that you and Pope Francis will have to agree to disagree on this. He very specifically told Congress "You are called to defend and preserve the dignity of your fellow citizens in the tireless and demanding pursuit of the common good, for this is the chief aim of all politics."

1 Our experience as Catholic sisters on the Hill for the last 45 years is that too many politicians measure success by how much spending they cut, not the damage those cuts do

2 like SNAP for example, which is funded by taxpayers and goes primarily to people who actually have jobs but are not paid enough by their employers to feed themselves or their families



Pope Francis!

SO MAYBE we are missing each other on the definition of A GOOD JOB? To me, a good job pays you enough to live on and provides basic decent benefits like paid sick leave and health insurance. Pope Francis has also said "together with a culture of work, there must be a culture of leisure as gratification. To put it another way: People who work must take time to relax, to be with their families, to enjoy themselves, read, listen to music, play a sport."

REWARD WORK

A good job is the surest way out of poverty. This has been proven time and again. For example, after the government instituted work requirements in 1996, employment rates for single mothers with children increased, while child poverty declined dramatically.

But that was just one program. Most welfare programs do not actually require or even encourage work, making it that much harder for you to start on the path to a better life.

Our plan starts with work, not welfare: **If you are capable, we will expect you to work or prepare for work.**

...and we will provide the very basic supports you need to make it possible for you to work - affordable child care, time off to take care of your children

Our plan includes:

- Stronger work requirements under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, requiring states to connect more people with good jobs. We should ~~redefine~~ TANF by restoring its core purpose, ending loopholes that states have used to ~~avoid helping people find work.~~ **REFORM** ...ending punitive measures and providing a real path to help struggling families get back on their feet
- Changes that allow non-custodial parents—who can have a hard time finding work given past transgressions—better access to job training and skills development, so they can make more money and meet child-support obligations. **Are we banning the box here, Speaker Ryan? Giving the formerly incarcerated an opportunity to vote and to fully participate in our democracy?**
- Reforms that expand work requirements to include housing benefits, like federal rental assistance. Some 44 percent of work-capable households using federal rental assistance report no annual income from wages. For people who can work or prepare for work, we should align housing benefits with TANF benefits to get more people on the path to self-sufficiency. **Speaker Ryan, have you ever actually met anyone on rental assistance?? Again, join us on the bus. As Pope Francis says, "Ideas disconnected from realities give rise to ineffectual forms of idealism and nominalism, capable at most of classifying and refining but certainly not calling to action."**
- A new approach to unemployment insurance that helps get people who are out of work back to work as soon as possible. The basic structure of the UI program has remained unchanged since the New Deal. We should give states greater flexibility to help people find a new job more quickly, and test those ideas to make sure we are getting results. **The president has some good ideas here. This work is so important we should work together on it, not in party silos.**
- Measures to encourage work-capable adults in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to work or prepare for work. **An increasing number of SNAP recipients are work-capable adults who do not have dependents and are not seeking work. The VAST majority** **NOT**
- A **new** focus for the Supplemental Security Income program that means more children will have access to special education services, and mental or physical therapies. Children who come into the SSI program stay in it, on average, for 26.7 years. Instead of just limiting our options to cash assistance without accountability, we should be offering children services to help them get on the path to a productive life. **NOTHING NEW HERE**

TAILOR BENEFITS TO PEOPLE'S NEEDS PRIVATE SECTOR

We should always reward work, but the system often does the exact opposite.

Under the status quo, as people start to make more money, they lose benefits. On its face, that makes sense. But since people are rarely on one program, that loss can be sudden and substantial. That's why this is often referred to as the "poverty trap." So, you may get a raise and actually lose money. You may get married and end up worse off financially. In other words, you are punished for working hard and doing the right thing.

What's going on here? Well, Washington looks at your needs in isolation, whether it is food, housing, energy, or child care. It doesn't see how your needs interact. It doesn't adapt to you. It just pushes you along the conveyor belt. It is one-size-fits-all, all the way. **Last we checked, Mr. Speaker, YOU are part of Washington.**

Our plan recognizes that everyone's needs and strengths are different. **We will match poverty-fighting programs with your needs more effectively so that it's easier for you to get back on your feet.**

Our plan includes:

- New authority for states to link poverty programs so that, instead of a one-size-fits-all strategy, you benefit from a more holistic approach. This means that if you would be penalized under current programs for getting married or working more hours or getting a promotion, states could repackage your benefits to help you find a path forward. **Code for block granting** **Kind of like they did with expanding Medicaid...Oh wait.**
- A commonsense approach to the way the federal government matches state and local spending so that, instead of a one-size-fits-all rate, we back the programs that work and wind down the ones that don't.

Are we giving these adults a way to care for their children when they are at work? Are we allowing them to stay on Medicaid so their kids can see a doctor if they go to work?

- Greater portability for housing assistance so that, instead of being consigned to poor neighborhoods, you can move to areas with more jobs and opportunities. — Let's see. So we condemn poor communities and hope some people will move out? How about improving those communities so everyone has safe homes, access to grocery stores, and reliable public transportation?
- A new commitment to consolidate and streamline programs, so people get better service and have a clear understanding of where they need to go for help. **Red Flag! This USUALLY MEANS cut government jobs.**

DEMAND RESULTS

The system is failing you, but it doesn't want you to know that. Washington measures success by the amount of money it spends and the number of programs it creates. We need to open up the system, so there is both accountability and collaboration. That means more voices at the table and more tools to identify what is working and what is not.

This is ironic. Your War on Poverty hearings only included testimony from ONE person experiencing poverty! If that's your standard, there DEFINITELY needs to be more voices at the table.

**The measure should be how it actually affects people living in poverty
Speaker Ryan, you should use this measure to see how this plan would actually work!**

We will open up the system to accountability and collaboration, backing ideas that work on the front lines. Instead of passing laws and hoping for the best, we will demand results for you and all taxpayers every step of the way.

Like?

LIKE WHAT?

Our plan includes:

- A pay-for-results partnership in which the government collaborates with private-sector providers seeking to raise capital for effective social programs. Through social impact financing, if—and only if—the program achieves its stated goals, the government repays the investment. **So ministries are supposed to front the money and then WAIT for a Congress that can't so much as pass a budget to pay them back?**
- A tier-based funding formula that promotes the development of new ideas, rigorously evaluates those concepts, and then backs those ideas that are proven to be effective.
- A pay-for-outcomes model that promotes competition among the states, and shuts down programs that are letting people down.
- New tools to better assess results, from common metrics to improved data collection and coordination.

IMPROVE SCHOOLS AND SKILLS

Too many Americans don't just fall on hard times; they are born into it, and they never get out. Most poor kids are part of families with single mothers, which can pose additional challenges. It isn't enough to get parents working and leave it at that. To break the cycle of poverty, we have to protect the next generation from poverty.

**Are we back to the welfare queen trope here?
Can we please let this horrible stereotype go?**

This is yet another area in which Washington's approach is disjointed. For example, there are 45 separate federal programs dedicated to early childhood, including a dozen just for education. Each program has its own set of rules and regulations. The programs overlap with each other, and can't be matched up with the needs of local communities. What gains are made, don't last.

If we treat poor kids like statistics, they will become statistics. We should see the potential in every child, and surround each one with opportunities, so that every child has a better shot at a good life.

We will make sure poor kids have more opportunities to succeed at every stage, from childhood through college.

Our plan includes:

- Measures to improve early childhood development, supporting ideas that work on the front lines, and making sure parents are fully informed about the choices they have for their kids' care and education.
- A more inclusive approach to help at-risk youth stay on the path to rehabilitation, tailoring benefits and services to each child's needs and challenges. **Does this include sentencing reform?**
- Reforms to child nutrition programs, so that we help the most vulnerable children—especially those in rural and low-income areas—get better access to healthy meals.
- Changes to improve job training, so that more workers can be matched with the skills needed to fill jobs in their communities.
- A modernization of the Pell Grant program that allows students to use those grants year-round if they want to accelerate their coursework, and financial aid reforms to make it easier for students to pay for college and pay back their loans.

We have to think beyond informing, we need programs that provide opportunities!

Speaker Ryan, how about adding: ALL WORK HAS DIGNITY, and that dignity must be respected by PAYING ALL WORKERS A LIVING WAGE?!

Catholic Social Teaching SHOULD have taught you that!

PLAN AND SAVE FOR THE FUTURE

Once you are on your feet, with a good job and a steady paycheck, you should have the ability to capitalize on that success. In many ways, this is the last rung on the ladder of the opportunity, toward a life of dignity and fulfillment.

Unfortunately, the tools to save remain beyond the reach of too many Americans. Nearly 9.6 million households in America do not have bank accounts. Another 24.8 million households have a bank account but use services outside the financial system. This means people have to hand over money just to cash a check, can't get access to responsible credit, or have to keep money in unsafe places.

We will make it easier for you and your family to plan for the future and be retirement-ready.

Our plan includes:

- Reforms that expand access to 401 (k)s, making it easier for small businesses to band together and provide them for their employees.
- New tools to expand access to basic banking services. This means reining in Dodd-Frank regulations to give you the widest possible array of choices, from community banks to small-dollar lending. **← I sincerely hope this isn't code for letting payday lending predators continue business as usual!!**
- Reforms that promote access to affordable retirement advice, providing low- and middle-income families the help they need to plan for retirement. **Maybe like the new Labor Department rule that required financial experts giving clients retirement advice to act in the best interest of those clients?**



Speaker Ryan, this totally misses the mark. Catholic Sisters and all of NETWORK are thrilled that you recognize government has a role in promoting the common good and ensuring all humans can live in dignity. But Catholic Sisters and the members of NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice had hoped for more than recycled ideas that have been tried and failed. Instead of slapping a little duct tape over the torn fabric of our society, we had been hoping that you would offer ideas to truly mend the gaps. We must focus on the gaps between what people have and what they need (and deserve) to reach their full potential. To work for the common good, we must mend the currently widening income and opportunity gaps that keep us all from coming together as a community.

A true anti-poverty agenda would include actions we can take right now - [here's 10 for starters](#), which if you had done your homework you would know. But it also addresses the real breadth of poverty in this country: There is POVERTY OF HOPE - the sense in some communities that nothing will ever change; and there is POVERTY OF HEALTH - a lack of opportunity to get basic care. There is POVERTY OF TIME - a parent working two or three jobs who gets home to kiss the kids goodnight only after they're asleep; and POVERTY OF POWER - people robbed of their right to vote and their voice in the political process. And of course, there is POVERTY OF VALUES - the belief that more money is the end goal at any cost, which allows us to condone paying workers less than they need to survive, let alone live, in our society.



Here's me at one of your War on Poverty hearings...

We had hoped for better:

Sister Simone Campbell SSS