



ASSISTANT DEMOCRATIC LEADER  
JAMES E. CLYBURN

February 16, 2011

Dear Colleague:

I am writing to you because you represent at least one “persistent poverty county,” one with a poverty rate of at least 20 percent for the last 30 years. I will be offering an amendment to the Continuing Resolution that would require at least 10 percent of the federal funds in certain accounts to be directed to these counties. I call this the “10-20-30” amendment and I have enclosed a copy for your review.

This initiative is focused on improving economic and social conditions in these areas that have been left behind for so long. There are 474 persistent poverty counties in America, rural and urban, comprising approximately 15 percent of all counties nationwide. I have enclosed a list of the persistent poverty counties in your Congressional district that meet this definition as well as a nationwide map.

This is not a partisan issue; poverty knows no political affiliation. Democrats represent 149 of these counties, with a total population of 8.7 million. Republicans represent 311 of these counties, with a total population of 8.3 million. 14, with a total population of 5.3 million, are split between Democrats and Republicans.

I included the 10-20-30 amendment in the Recovery Act’s Rural Development section of the Agriculture title and it is working. The formula allowed many persistent poverty counties to benefit from Recovery Act funds they would not have otherwise received. Projects like these are crucial to meeting the basic needs of the community and laying the groundwork for future economic success.

We are now in a time of fiscal belt-tightening and operating in a post-earmark world. We must not allow these persistent poverty counties to continue to be left behind. These are the poorest of the poor and many of these communities lack the wherewithal and technical expertise to apply for federal grants and loans. With Members of Congress now restricted from directing spending to these impoverished areas, it is even more important that we direct the federal bureaucracy to focus on these distressed communities.

I hope you will join me in supporting this important amendment, and I invite you to work with me as part of the persistent poverty working group that I will be bringing together.

With best regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

James E. Clyburn  
Assistant Democratic Leader