



## Enough Is Enough

Posted: 08/22/2011 2:54 pm EDT

Every day, as I travel through my district in Baltimore on my way to my office, to the grocery store, or to church, people ask me one question: Cummings, can you help find me a job?

With anxiety and, often, despair in their eyes, my constituents explain that the most pressing need they have is for jobs that will enable them to pay for the basic essentials of life -- their rent, food, and medical bills -- and begin to save just a little for the future.

When I listen to the national dialogue, I know that my constituents -- and the majority of Americans who identify job creation as their top priority -- are simply not being heard.

Some 25 million Americans are unemployed or under-employed. While the national unemployment rate is 9.1%, it is nearly 16% among African Americans and more than 11% among Hispanic Americans.

Between 2005 and 2009, inflation-adjusted median wealth fell by more than 50% among African American households and by 66% among Hispanic households, according to a [recent Pew Center study](#).

However, our sluggish economy is not affecting just communities of color or urban centers; it's permeating nearly every corner, block and neighborhood in America.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation recently released a [report](#) that found that childhood poverty rose in 38 out of 50 U.S. states in the past decade. Nearly 44 million Americans lived in poverty in 2009, an increase of more than 3.7 million over the previous year.

To say these statistics are staggering is an understatement.

What is Congress' answer?

The House leadership has prioritized the enactment of legislation that will worsen the crisis by destroying jobs.

Moody's Analytics chief economist Mark Zandi [estimates](#) that H.R. 1, legislation proposed and passed by House Republicans, would have destroyed 700,000 jobs. Zandi also estimates that Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan's budget resolution for fiscal year 2012 would have destroyed 1.7 million jobs in its first two years of implementation, primarily by slashing Medicaid, which would cut core health services for the elderly and low-income families and children already struggling to get by.

More than 200 days have passed since the Republicans took over the House and there has been no action to create jobs. No floor debates or votes on a jobs bill have been held, and few hearings designed to get America back to work have been convened.

In fact, Speaker Boehner's office recently said that he has "no plans to take up" jobs proposals.

This is exactly why the American people feel they have been ignored.

Why aren't the Republicans listening? Some have suggested this is a calculated strategy to win elections in 2012: stymie any job creation initiatives and then blame the president for high unemployment.

But I know we're better than that. We have to be better than that. Too much is at stake.

Congress has to immediately consider and enact legislation to create jobs as soon as we come back into session.

The House Oversight Committee, on which I serve as Ranking Member, would be an ideal forum in which to begin this task given its broad jurisdiction over government and industry. However, our Committee majority has thus far refused to step up to the challenge.

Back in February, I wrote to Chairman Darrell Issa requesting a hearing on a bipartisan proposal to expand infrastructure investments that was endorsed by both the Chamber of Commerce and organized labor.

Chairman Issa instead sent more than 150 letters asking industry which regulations they wanted repealed, and held more than a dozen hearings to entertain their requests.

My request, like the pleas of the American people, went unheard.

Other job creation proposals also deserve immediate consideration. The bipartisan Joint Economic Committee has introduced legislation to expand tax credits to encourage research and development to spur innovation and create jobs.

And Rep. Jan Schakowsky has developed a proposal to create more than two million jobs within the next two years building schools and roads and ensuring that communities are safe by closing tax loopholes.

Rep. John Larson has proposed legislation to create a "super committee" to spur job creation. This is an idea I fully endorse, especially since the standing House Committees have failed to act.

A great African proverb says, "If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together."

It's going to take real bipartisanship to get our nation's fiscal house in order and to put people back to work again. I, along with my Democratic colleagues, stand ready to work with Republicans to ensure we get moving.

Enough with the inaction, enough with the inflammatory rhetoric, and enough with the partisan gamesmanship.

The American people have spoken. It's time to listen and act.