

Black Youth Vote Commentary on Impact of Jobs Act & Poverty Report



Washington, DC – It is a critical time in America. The recession has been tough, especially for young black American's who are faced with bleak job prospects, exorbitant student loans and overwhelming hopelessness. With an unemployment rate for young black males over 18 percent, young black men are still hemorrhaging and the people we put in office to represent us are just starting to take notice.

If that's not enough, earlier this week the US Census Bureau released "Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2010," a report that underscores the spiraling rate of poverty and decline of the median household income for Americans, especially Black American's. This is the third consecutive year that the household income for African-American's declined and, according to the report, 10.7 million African Americans lived in poverty in 2010.

As for young people, as usual, we're the hardest hit by a depressed economy. The New York Times recently reported that young people between the ages of 25 – 34 are depending more on their parents for financial support; of that age group without family support 45.3 percent of them live in poverty. This is the same population experiencing high unemployment at 45.6 percent. That's right, almost half of the 25 – 34 year-olds are unemployed. We need help now.

Earlier this week President Obama sent a much-needed American Jobs Act to the Hill for swift passage. This jobs legislative package is a critical attempt by the Obama administration to

address the economic hardships faced by Americans across the country and is expected to cost \$447 billion.

President Obama's American Jobs Act includes the "Pathways Back to Work Fund" which provides summer jobs for programs for low-income youth and year-round employment for economically disadvantaged young adults. Additionally, the extension of the payroll tax will help 20 million African-American workers and the new tax credit for hiring the long term unemployed will have a significant impact on the Black community.

The American Jobs Act also takes a step in the right direction in preventing employers from discriminating against the long term unemployed, which will benefit young adults as well as black males – the members of the black community who are chronically unemployed.

Black Youth Vote! is cautiously optimistic about this bill. We're happy to see our elected officials finally prioritize job creation and hope that this bill will begin to create jobs with livable wages for our community. However, one thing we know is the political process; and sending the American Jobs Act to Capitol Hill is merely a step in an on-going journey.

It is important that black youth take the necessary steps to compel our elected officials to remain focused on creating jobs. Whether you're Democrat, Republican, or Independent, you must pay attention and make sure that our decision makers constructively move on social policies that will aid in the upward mobility of marginalized communities.

Below are four simple and effective ways to be involved:

For more direct action on the "American Jobs Act" please connect with our partner organization The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights by visiting http://www.civilrights.org/action_center/america-needs-job.html

Connect with a local community organization(s) and leader(s)

to serve as “community watchdogs” to ensure that once funds are sent to states that those most impacted are benefiting from the “American Jobs Act” and to prevent wasteful spending. Register to vote and Educate members in your local community on social policy issues that affect your community as a conversation with action ahead of the 2012 election.

Stay updated on our iThink2012 campaign by following us on Twitter: @blackyouthvote, Facebook: Black Youth Vote!, Email: blackyouthvote@ncbcp.org, or TEXT iThink2012 to 69302

It’s time for young folks to take control of our own future. You need to read about the pros and cons of the “American Jobs Act” and I’m sure you will see how it benefits young people – especially young black men. In order to get swift passage of the “American Jobs Act” to put our brothers and sisters back to work with livable wages black youth must be proactive. Without action, we will continue to lead in economic and social disparities. Enough is Enough. It’s time to get busy making the government work for us.

Deven D. Anderson is Senior Program Associate of Black Youth Vote!, a Youth & Young Adult Initiative of The National Coalition on Black Civic Participation (www.ncbcp.org). blackyouthvote@ncbcp.org

Black Youth Vote! is a national grassroots coalition of organization and individuals committed to increasing political and civic involvement among Black men and women aged 18-35. The National Coalition on Black Civic Participation launched Black Youth Vote! to empower Black youth by educating them about the political process and training them to identify issues and influence public policy through participation. Over the past 15 years, BYV! has been leading the movement to increase black youth voter participation and engagement for black youth.