

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

Chairman Cedric L. Richmond

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Jobs and Justice Act of 2018

2018 marks the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. While Dr. King is well known for his efforts to champion social justice issues, he and many other civil rights activists of the day fought for economic justice as well. In addition to voting rights and equal protections under the law, every man, woman, and child deserves equal access to economic opportunities. Sadly, Dr. King's Dream was never fully realized. Major social justice advancements in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 were followed by massive disinvestment in Black communities and a war on drugs that led to the mass incarceration of Black men and women.

50 years later, African Americans continue to maintain an unemployment rate almost double that of their White counterparts. On average, African-American families have one-seventh the amount of wealth amassed by White families. Public schools are woefully underfunded and African Americans fortunate enough to obtain a quality education continue to face racial discrimination in the labor market. African Americans are more likely to be unemployed compared to their White counterparts at all levels of educational attainment.

Additionally, African Americans continue to seek equal protections under the law. In the wake of the gutting of the Voting Rights Act, Black voters have been targeted by voter suppression efforts with "almost surgical precision." Moreover, Black families have been devastated by America's scourge of mass incarceration. African Americans are incarcerated at more than five times the rate of Whites. In addition, although African Americans make up 13 percent of the national population, they make up 40 percent of the prison population. The criminal justice system traps low-income and minority families in a cycle of devastation, from broken bonds between police and the communities they serve, to overwhelming obstacles for those who have paid their debts to society.

The Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) stands on the shoulders of Dr. King and other civil rights heroes and will carry on the fight for social and economic justice. That is why the CBC is pleased to introduce the Jobs and Justice Act, omnibus legislation that addresses a wide range of issues, from massive investments in infrastructure and workforce development training to promote economic empowerment, to comprehensive reform of our nation's criminal justice system. The Jobs and Justice Act proposes bold solutions to address the generations of social and economic inequities and injustices faced by the Black community.

Division A – Jobs: This division of the bill includes several provisions to advance economic opportunity in underserved communities, including infrastructure investment, workforce development, poverty alleviation measures, small business and economic development support, housing and asset building provisions, and investments in education.

Division B – Justice: This division of the bill includes comprehensive criminal justice reform, including policing reform, marijuana decriminalization, sentencing reform, prison reform, and provisions to remove the collateral consequences that make it difficult for the formerly incarcerated to become productive members of society. This section also includes measures to protect access to the ballot.