

17110 Republicans' biggest lie: that they represent the working class

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Republicans have been telling a lie. Specifically, it's a lie to poor white voters that Republicans have their best interests at heart – and that their party will best protect those interests.

We saw it during the campaign in Donald Trump's promises to return blue collar jobs to poor, rural Americans even as Trump products continued to be manufactured overseas and we saw it again this week when a leading Republican insisted that poor people must choose between buying a new smartphone and having health insurance.

“Americans have choices and they've got to make a choice,” Jason Chaffetz said on CNN in defending the proposed replacement for Obamacare. “So maybe rather than getting that new iPhone that they just love, maybe they should invest in their own health care.”

By saying he believes such choices are appropriate, Chaffetz is implying that poor people deserve their fate because poverty can be attributed to personal failure, not the system.

However, getting a new smartphone is not a regular cost like health insurance: it's a onetime expenditure. It's also something that costs hundreds, not thousands of dollars annually (a year of insurance is over \$6,000, more if you get shot or run-over or diagnosed with a devastating illness, which is especially likely for poor people.

Having a working phone is not a luxury. It is an essential tool people need to do the sort of thing that is so important according to Chaffetz: finding and keeping employment.

Chaffetz' remark wasn't an accident. It signals a belief with deep roots in the Republican party. We saw a particularly pronounced example of it in a Heritage Foundation report that seemed to suggest that poor people aren't actually poor because they own appliances. That the cost of appliances has been dropping for decades while such essentials as education and health care have dramatically increased didn't seem to make much of an impression on conservatives like Bill O'Reilly who, when he learned that 55% of poor people have cell phones, asked: “How can you be so poor and have all this stuff?”

But what's perhaps most insulting of all is that Chaffetz and the Republicans are condescending to the very people that helped elect their party in a historic Republican wave.

In making it harder for poor people to access health insurance, Republicans aren't just insulting and endangering the most vulnerable Americans, they're literally preparing to strip the individual mandate from the very citizens they're mandated to protect.

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