

OPINION

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A GOP Leader's Economic Plan:

Taking food from the poor

BY JIM HIGHTOWER

Those who say that Republican Congress critters are just a gaggle of naysaying boneheads with no economic plan of their own haven't been listening to Rep. John Linder.

This Georgia right-winger is irked that America's food-stamp program will grow to more than \$60 billion this year. "This is craziness," Linder barked to a New York Times reporter. "We're at

risk of creating an entire class, a subset of people, just comfortable getting by living off the government."

Comfortable? When was the last time this pampered lawmaker experienced the "comforts" of the food stamp life? Linder's been "living off the government" for 18 years, but at the high end-drawing \$174,000 a year in pay, plus subsidized health care and a fat pension.

So what's his economic plan: "You improve the economy by lowering taxes," he explains. That's his whole plan.

Perhaps this multi-millionaire has forgotten that Washington tried that plan throughout the last decade—a decade in which there was no net-job creation, wages plummeted, middle-class incomes declined, health care costs soared, housing prices tumbled, and millions of families fell into poverty.

So that "subset of people" on food stamps who Linder denigrates is actually his own spawn. The food stamp program has had to grow because the tinkle-down economy that he pushed wrecked America's middle class.

Indeed, talk about a subset, there

are now some six million Americans who are living entirely on food stamps—they've lost their jobs and have no other income. That's one in every 50 of us, and their number continues to grow rapidly.

Linder and his ilk have not hesitated to throw hundreds of billions of our tax dollars at failed Wall Street bankers. But he would literally take the food out of the mouths of people in real need. That's not a plan, it's a scandal.

Jim Hightower is a national radio commentator, writer and public speaker.

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