112TH CONGRESS 1ST SESSION

H.R.3300

To establish the Federal Interagency Working Group on Reducing Poverty which will create and carry out a national plan to cut poverty in America in half in ten years.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

November 1, 2011

Ms. Lee of California (for herself, Mr. Stark, Mr. Lewis of Georgia, Mr. Baca, Mr. Conyers, Ms. Schakowsky, Mr. McDermott, Mr. Butterfield, Mr. Serrano, Ms. Brown of Florida, and Mr. Kucinich) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

A BILL

To establish the Federal Interagency Working Group on Reducing Poverty which will create and carry out a national plan to cut poverty in America in half in ten years.

- 1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
- 2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,
- 3 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.
- This Act may be cited as the "Half in Ten Act of
- 5 2011".
- 6 SEC. 2. FINDINGS.
- 7 Congress finds the following:

- 1 (1) Poverty can be seen as a deep, structural 2 problem that implicates our value system and our 3 educational and economic institutions.
 - (2) Poverty may be defined as the lack of basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, clothing, health care, education, economic security, and economic opportunity.
 - (3) Policy initiatives and many safety net programs addressing poverty have not kept pace with the needs of millions of Americans.
 - (4) The lack of an equitable distribution of housing choices across the country leads to isolation and concentrated poverty.
 - (5) The number of Americans living in poverty rose by over 2.6 million from 2009 to 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, September 2011).
 - (6) There were 46.2 million Americans living in poverty in 2010, consisting of 15.1 percent of the American people (U.S. Census Bureau, September 2011).
 - (7) Poverty has a disproportionate impact on minority communities in America with 27.4 percent of African-Americans, 26.6 percent of Hispanics, 12.1 percent of Asian Americans, and 9.9 percent of

- Whites living in poverty in the United States in 2 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, September 2011).
- 3 (8) In 2010 a family of 4 was considered poor 4 under the U.S. Census Bureau's official measure if 5 the family's income was below \$22,314.
 - (9) The economic consequences of poverty in the United States are estimated to be at least \$500 billion per year (Center for American Progress, 2007).
 - (10) Children who grow up in poverty experience higher crime rates, decreased productivity, and higher health costs over their lives (Center for American Progress, 2007).
- (11) 3,500,000 seniors lived in poverty in 2010
 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).
- 16 (12) Young Americans, ages 18–24, experience 17 a higher poverty rate than the national average 18 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).
- 19 (13) 16,400,000 children lived in poverty in 20 2010—more than one in every five American chil-21 dren (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).
- 22 (14) Almost 35 percent of African-American 23 children and over 30 percent of Hispanic children 24 lived in poverty in 2009 (U.S. Census Bureau, 25 2011).

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- 1 (15) The 46,180,000 of Americans in poverty 2 in 2010 was the largest number yet recorded in the 3 52 years for which poverty estimates are available 4 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).
 - (16) Children who live in families who fall into poverty for even short periods of time are at greater risk of a lifetime of lower earnings, lower educational attainment, and increased reliance on public services and increased rates of incarceration (First Focus, 2008).
 - (17) It is estimated that the additional 3 million children who were forced into poverty due to the recession of 2008, resulted in \$35 billion in economic losses annually, and will cause at least \$1.7 trillion in economic losses to the United States during their lifetimes (First Focus, 2008).
 - (18) Reducing poverty, especially child poverty, not only reduces costs for Federal, State, and local social services and benefits programs, but also increases tax revenue at all levels of government (Children's Defense Fund, 2009).
 - (19) The House of Representatives, on January 22, 2008, has resolved that it is the sense of Congress that the United States should set a national

goal of cutting poverty in half over the next 10 years.

3 SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

4 In this Act:

- 5 (1) FEDERAL AGENCY.—The term "Federal agency" means any executive department, Govern7 ment corporation, Government-controlled corpora8 tion, or other establishment in the executive branch of the Government (including the Executive Office of the President), or any independent regulatory agen11 cy.
 - (2) POVERTY.—The term "poverty" means an income level and living standard associated with and based on the official poverty measure as established and updated by the U.S. Census Bureau which establishes a threshold of minimum income necessary to achieve a standard of living free from deprivation of basic needs.
 - (3) Extreme Poverty.—The term "extreme poverty" means having an income level or living standard at a level of extreme deprivation based on living with income below 50 percent of the Federal poverty line as established by the U.S. Census.

- 1 (4) NEAR POVERTY.—The term "near poverty"
 2 means having a level of household income below 200
 3 percent of the Federal poverty line.
 - (5) CHILD POVERTY.—The term "child poverty" means poverty which impacts those persons under 18 years of age.
 - (6) Deprivation.—The term "deprivation" means lacking some or all basic human needs.
 - (7) DECENT LIVING STANDARD.—The term "decent living standard" means the amount of annual income that would allow an individual to live beyond deprivation at a safe and decent, but modest, standard of living.
 - (8) ALTERNATIVE POVERTY MEASURES.—The term "alternative poverty measures" means measures and indicators, other than the traditional income based measure of poverty, which can provide a more detailed picture of the low-income and poverty stricken populations, such as the number of people who were kept above poverty by Government supports, the number of people who are poor due to medical expenses, child care, and work expenses, the rates of food insecurity, the number of people who are asset poor (with less than three months of income saved), the number of disconnected youth, teen

- birth rates, participation rates in Federal anti-pov erty programs for all eligible populations, and the
 number of people who are unbanked.
 - (9) REGIONAL COSTS OF LIVING.—The term "regional costs of living" means a measure of the differing costs of maintaining a given living standard in varying regional, geographic, urban or rural regions.
 - (10) Economic insecurity.—The term "economic insecurity" means the inability of individuals and households to cope with routine adverse or costly life events and the lack of means to maintain a decent standard of living and to recover from the costly consequences of those events.
 - (11) Economic stability" means individuals and households have access to the means and support systems necessary to effectively cope with adverse or costly life events and have the ability to effectively recover from the consequences of those events while maintaining their standard of living or maintaining a decent standard of living.
 - (12) DIGITAL DIVIDE.—The term "digital divide" means the gap between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas at different

- socio-economic levels with regard to both their access information and communications technologies and including the imbalance both in physical access to technology and the resources, education and skills needed to effectively use computer technology and the Internet for a wide variety of activities.
 - (13) Outcomes.—The term "outcomes" means change in the economic status, economic instability or economic security of an individual, household or other population which is attributable to a planned intervention, benefit, or service or series of interventions, benefits, and services, regardless of whether such an intervention was intended to change such economic status.
 - (14) DISPARATE IMPACT.—The term "disparate impact" refers to the historic and ongoing impacts of the pattern and practice of discrimination in employment, education, housing, banking and nearly every other aspect of American life in the economy, society or culture that have an adverse impact on minorities, women, or other protected groups, regardless of whether such practices were motivated by discriminatory intent.

1	SEC. 4. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FEDERAL INTERAGENCY
2	WORKING GROUP ON REDUCING POVERTY.
3	(a) Establishment of Federal Interagency
4	Working Group on Reducing Poverty.—There is es-
5	tablished within the Department of Health and Human
6	Services, a Federal Interagency Working Group on Reduc-
7	ing Poverty, which shall be chaired by the Secretary of
8	Health and Human Services, and whose members shall be
9	selected by their respective agency heads from the senior
10	ranks of their agencies, which shall—
11	(1) develop, within 180 days of enactment, a
12	National Plan or Strategy to reduce the number of
13	persons living in poverty in America in half within
14	10 years of the release of the 2011 Census report
15	on Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage
16	in the United States: 2010, that includes goals and
17	objectives relating to—
18	(A) reducing in half the number of Ameri-
19	cans living in poverty as reported by the 2011
20	Census report on Income, Poverty and Health
21	Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2010;
22	(B) eliminating child poverty in America;
23	(C) eliminating extreme poverty in Amer-
24	ica;
25	(D) improving the effectiveness and out-
26	comes of poverty related programs by improving

our understanding of the root causes of poverty, the social, economic, and the cultural contributors to persistent intergenerational poverty;

> (E) improving the measure of poverty to include more indicators and measures that can meaningfully account for other aspects relating to the measure of poverty, such as regional differences in costs of living, the impact of rising income inequality, the impact of the persistent "digital divide", expanding the understanding of poverty by distinguishing a standard that measures a level of freedom from deprivation versus a standard that measures a standard of economic adequacy provided by a living wage and access to a decent living standard, and the impact of poverty on other measures of economic stability and economic outcomes, such as educational attainment, rates of incarceration, lifetime healthcare, earnings, access to healthcare outcomes, access to housing, and including other measures as necessary to improve our understanding of why poverty persists in America;

> (F) eliminating the disparate rates of poverty based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, or

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sexual orientation and identity, especially among children in those households so impacted;

- (G) measuring effectiveness of poverty related programs on the basis of long term outcomes, including the long term savings and value of preventive practice and policy, and employing fact based measures of programs to make improvements;
- (H) improving the accessibility of benefit and social services programs, reducing the complexity and difficulty of enrollment, and improving the rates of enrollment in need based programs for all eligible recipients to maximize the impact of benefits and social services programs on reducing the impacts of poverty and improving economic outcomes;
- (I) expanding eligibility to improve the coordination of service delivery, reduce gaps in eligibility, and improve outcomes of programs addressing poverty in the Federal Government;
- (J) reducing the negative impact of asset limits on eligibility for Federal programs on the effectiveness of programs where limited eligibility creates gaps in necessary service and ben-

- efit delivery, and in access which prevents needy beneficiaries from improving long term outcomes and achieving long term economic independence from need based programs;
 - (K) improving the access of poor, low-income, and the unemployed to good jobs with adequate wages and benefits;
 - (L) expanding and stabilizing poor and low income persons connection to work;
 - (M) developing a comprehensive strategy to connect low-income young people and to re-connect currently disconnected youth to education, work, and their community; and
 - (N) shifting the focus of poverty and human needs programs across the Federal Government beyond the relief of deprivation to instead setting goals, measures, and outcomes related to helping individuals and families rise up and out of poverty and achieving long term economic stability which will reduce long term costs in domestic social needs programs, reduce long term healthcare costs due to the improved health of formerly poverty stricken households, increase the number of tax paying individuals which will increase revenue, and lower the en-

rollment and costs in need based benefits and services programs, thus improving the economy and reducing long term deficits for Federal, State, and local governments;

- (2) oversee, coordinate, and integrate all policies and activities of the Federal Government, in coordination and consultation with the Domestic Policy Council and the National Economic Council, across all agencies relating to reducing the number of individuals, families, and children living below the Federal poverty line, in extreme poverty or near poverty and increasing the number of households able to achieve long-term economic stability with assets sufficient to maintain a decent living standard without relying on public supports—
 - (A) economic, commercial, and programmatic policies that can effect or relieve the effects of poverty through job creation, and economic development targeted to low income, minority, rural, urban and other populations who suffer disparate rates of poverty, among Federal agencies; and
 - (B) services and benefits including emergency programs, discretionary economic programs, and other policies and activities nec-

essary to ensure that the Federal Government is able to mount effective responses to economic downturns and increases in the rates of poverty;

- (3) ensure that all relevant Federal agencies and congressional committees comply with appropriate guidelines, policies, and directives from the Federal Interagency Working Group on Reducing Poverty and the Department of Health and Human Services and other Federal agencies with responsibilities relating to poverty reduction or improving economic stability and independence;
- (4) ensure that Federal agencies have access to, receive, and appropriately disseminate best practices in the administration of programs, have adequate resources to maximize the public awareness of programs, increase the reach of those programs, especially into historically disenfranchised communities, maximize enrollment for all eligible Americans, share relevant data, and issue relevant guidance in consultation with non-government organizations and policy experts in the field and State and local government officials who administer or direct policy for anti-poverty programs in increasing and maximizing the enrollment into and administration of programs and services designed to alleviate poverty; and

1	(5) enact best practices for improved data col-
2	lection, relevant to—
3	(A) reducing poverty;
4	(B) reducing the racial, ethnic, age, gen-
5	der, and sexual orientation or sexual identity
6	based disparities in the rates of poverty;
7	(C) the effectiveness and efficiency of pro-
8	grams;
9	(D) streamlining enrollment and eligibility
10	for programs;
11	(E) improving long term outcomes for pro-
12	grams;
13	(F) reducing reliance on public programs;
14	(G) improving connections to work;
15	(H) improving economic stability;
16	(I) improving savings and investment, ac-
17	cess to capital, increasing rates of entrepreneur-
18	ship;
19	(J) improving access to living wage em-
20	ployment; and
21	(K) improving access to employment based
22	benefits.
23	(b) DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL POVERTY POLICY.—
24	There shall be a Staff Director of National Poverty Policy.

1	who shall be the head of the Federal Interagency Working
2	Group on Reducing Poverty.
3	SEC. 5. APPOINTMENT AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DI-
4	RECTOR.
5	(a) Appointment.—
6	(1) IN GENERAL.—The Staff Director shall be
7	appointed by the Secretary of Health and Human
8	Services.
9	(2) QUALIFICATIONS.—The Secretary shall ap-
10	point the Staff Director from among individuals who
11	have demonstrated ability and knowledge in social
12	policy, improving outcome based management, issues
13	of equity and equal opportunity and access to serv-
14	ices and economic opportunity.
15	(b) Responsibilities.—The Staff Director shall—
16	(1) advise the Secretary and all relevant cabinet
17	secretaries, and agency officials regarding the estab-
18	lishment of policies, goals, objectives, and priorities
19	for reducing poverty in America in half in ten years,
20	ending child poverty, ending extreme poverty and
21	eliminating racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual iden-
22	tity and orientation based disparities in the rates of
23	poverty;
24	(2) advise the Secretary, relevant cabinet secre-
25	taries, heads of independent Federal agencies and

other entities within the Executive Office of the
President regarding mechanisms to improve the effectiveness, coordination, impact, and outcomes of
social services, benefits, and other poverty reduction
and economic opportunity programs, in collaboration
with experts in the field, non-governmental organiza-

tions, and other governments;

- 8 (3) work with Federal agencies to oversee, co-9 ordinate, and integrate the implementation of the 10 National Plan or Strategy, including consultation 11 with independent non-governmental policy experts 12 and service provider groups engaged in serving low-13 income persons, children and households, State and 14 local government officials who administer or direct 15 policy for anti-poverty programs, and with as many 16 groups that directly represent low-income people, 17 such as public housing tenants' associations, or 18 other similar groups; and
 - (4) resolve any disputes that arise between Federal agencies relating to the National Plan to reduce poverty in half in ten years or other matters within the responsibility of the Office.

23 SEC. 6. CONSULTATION.

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24 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Director may consult and ob-25 tain recommendations from, as needed, such Presidential

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and other advisory entities such as consultation with inde-
    pendent non-governmental policy experts and service pro-
    vider groups engaged in serving low-income persons, chil-
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    dren, and households; State and local government officials
    who administer or direct policy for anti-poverty programs,
    and groups made up of low-income people, such as public
    housing tenants' associations, or other similar groups as
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    the Director determines will assist in carrying out the mis-
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    sion of the Office, including—
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             (1) the Administration for Children and Fami-
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        lies (ACF);
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             (2) the Administration on Aging (AoA);
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             (3) the Department of Agriculture (USDA);
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             (4) the Bankruptcy Courts;
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             (5) the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protec-
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        tion;
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             (6) the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA);
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             (7) the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA);
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             (8) the Bureau of the Census;
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             (9) the Center for Nutrition Policy and Pro-
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        motion:
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             (10) the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Serv-
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        ices (formerly the Health Care Financing Adminis-
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        tration);
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             (11) the Commission on Civil Rights;
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1	(12) the Office of Community Planning and
2	Development;
3	(13) the Consumer Financial Protection Bu-
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5	(14) the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Jus-
6	tice and Delinquency Prevention;
7	(15) the Corporation for National and Commu-
8	nity Service;
9	(16) the Council of Economic Advisers;
10	(17) the Department of Agriculture (USDA);
11	(18) the Department of Commerce (DOC);
12	(19) the Department of Defense (DOD);
13	(20) the Department of Education (ED);
14	(21) the Department of Health and Human
15	Services (HHS);
16	(22) the Department of Housing and Urban
17	Development (HUD);
18	(23) the Department of Justice (DOJ);
19	(24) the Department of Labor (DOL);
20	(25) the Department of the Treasury;
21	(26) the Department of Transportation (DOT);
22	(27) the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA);
23	(28) the Disability Employment Policy Office;
24	(29) the Domestic Policy Council:

1	(30) the Drug Enforcement Administration
2	(DEA);
3	(31) the Economic Development Administra-
4	tion;
5	(32) the Economic Research Service;
6	(33) the English Language Acquisition Office;
7	(34) the Equal Employment Opportunity Com-
8	mission (EEOC);
9	(35) the Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity;
10	(36) the Federal Bureau of Prisons;
11	(37) the Federal Housing Finance Board;
12	(38) the Federal Labor Relations Authority;
13	(39) the Federal Trade Commission (FTC);
14	(40) the Food and Nutrition Service;
15	(41) the Indian Health Service;
16	(42) the Interagency Council on Homelessness;
17	(43) the Internal Revenue Service (IRS);
18	(44) the Legal Services Corporation;
19	(45) the National AIDS Policy Office;
20	(46) the National Credit Union Administration;
21	(47) the National Economic Council;
22	(48) the National Institutes of Health (NIH);
23	(49) the National Labor Relations Board;
24	(50) the Occupational Safety & Health Admin-
25	istration (OSHA);

1 (51) the Office of Management and Budget 2 (OMB);3 (52) the Office of Refugee Resettlement; 4 (53) the Office of Policy Development and Re-5 search (Housing and Urban Development Depart-6 ment); 7 (54) the Small Business Administration (SBA); 8 (55) the Social Security Administration (SSA); 9 (56) the Substance Abuse and Mental Health 10 Services Administration; 11 (57) the Veterans' Employment and Training 12 Service; and 13 (58) the Women's Bureau (Labor Department). 14 (b) NATIONAL STRATEGY.—In developing and updat-15 ing the National Strategy the Executive Director shall consult with the Domestic Policy Council, the National 16 Economic Council, and, as appropriate, hold regional public hearings around the country to collect information and 18 feedback from the public on their efforts and experience 19 20 for the development and updating of the National Strategy 21 and make this information available to the public. 22 SEC. 7. REPORTS TO CONGRESS AND THE PUBLIC. 23 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Chair of the Federal Interagency Working Group on Reducing Poverty shall submit 25 an annual report to the appropriate congressional commit-

- 1 tees describing the activities, ongoing projects, and plans
- 2 of the Federal Government designed to meet the goals and
- 3 objectives of the National Strategy on Poverty. The report
- 4 shall include an accounting of the savings to the Govern-
- 5 ment from any increased efficiencies in the delivery of
- 6 services, any savings from reducing the numbers of Ameri-
- 7 cans living in poverty and reductions in the demand for
- 8 need based services and benefits for which persons living
- 9 in and near poverty are eligible, as well as an accounting
- 10 of any increase in revenue collections due to the numbers
- 11 of persons who become gainfully employed and pay taxes
- 12 into the Treasury instead of drawing benefits and services
- 13 from it.
- 14 (b) National Academy of Sciences Work-
- 15 SHOP.—Within 90 days after funds are made available to
- 16 carry out this Act, the Secretary of Health and Human
- 17 Services shall contract with the National Academy of
- 18 Sciences (hereinafter in this subsection referred to as the
- 19 "NAS") to initiate a workshop series to provide necessary
- 20 background information to enable the Working Group on
- 21 Reducing Poverty to develop and finalize its plan.
- 22 (1) The NAS shall convene a steering com-
- 23 mittee to organize, plan, and conduct a public work-
- shop on what is known about the economic and so-

1	cial costs of poverty, including, but not limited to
2	the following:
3	(A) Macroeconomic costs (effects on pro-
4	ductivity and economic output).
5	(B) Health costs (effects on health expend-
6	itures and health status).
7	(C) Crime and other social costs.
8	(D) Direct federal budget effects (e.g., out-
9	lays for income support and other poverty re-
10	duction programs).
11	(E) The workshop shall also consider pov-
12	erty metrics (e.g., income poverty, food insecu-
13	rity, and other measures of deprivation), and
14	their role in assessing the effects of poverty and
15	the performance of anti-poverty programs.
16	The NAS shall commission experts to prepare pa-
17	pers that summarize and critique the relevant lit-
18	erature estimating monetary and non-monetary eco-
19	nomic and social impacts of poverty. A workshop
20	summary shall be produced that, along with the pa-
21	pers, shall be available electronically on the NAS
22	website. This workshop shall be convened within 6

months of receipt of a contract, the papers posted

immediately, and the summary released by the end

of month.

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- 1 (2) The NAS steering committee shall organize, 2 plan, and conduct a second public workshop on what 3 is known about the economic and social costs and 4 benefits of a variety of programs and strategies to 5 reduce and prevent poverty. It shall take account of 6 such issues as the following:
 - (A) Short-term versus long-term effects, including budget implications.
 - (B) Effects for different population groups, such as children, the elderly, immigrants, long-term single-parent families, displaced older workers, young people with large loans, people in areas of concentrated poverty and other social ills (e.g., Indian reservations, some inner city areas, some rural areas).
 - (C) Effects by depth of poverty and nearpoverty (e.g., income to poverty ratios of less than 50 percent, less than 100 percent, less than 200 percent).

This second workshop shall be convened within 9 months of receipt of a contract, the papers posted immediately, and a summary released by the end of month 12.

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- 1 (c) Report.—The relevant sections of the report
- 2 shall be posted on each agency's website on the plans and
- 3 impacts specific to their agency.
- 4 (d) Public Report.—A version of each report sub-
- 5 mitted under this section shall be made available to the
- 6 public.
- 7 (e) Legislative Language.—The Working Group
- 8 on Reducing Poverty shall submit, as necessary, legislative
- 9 language, including specific legislative recommendations to
- 10 the Congress of the United States towards achieving the
- 11 national goals.

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