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The major headline in most newspapers and media outlets was the notion that the national poverty rate remained virtually unchanged from the previous year. While millions of Americans continue to struggle to find work and provide for their families, it's important to take a moment to reflect on what has actually transpired under President Obama's watch, and keep things in perspective. Let's not forget that in the face of this intense opposition, he was still successful in passing health care reform, the Recovery Act, an extension of unemployment benefits and many more programs that prevented these poverty numbers from being far greater. For anyone who mistakenly thinks a Romney/Ryan ticket would somehow serve the middle-class and poor better in this country, let me give you a quick wake-up call.

By now, most are aware of the magnitude and depth of the economic crisis that President Obama inherited in 2008. In addition to preventing the nation from falling off of a cliff, the President pushed forth a multitude of measures that haven't even been factored into these latest poverty stats. Non-cash government aid like food stamps, the Earned Income Tax Credit and more aren't included in the equation when these figures are compiled. If these programs were added, millions more would have been lifted out of the poverty category, according to Census Bureau officials themselves. While we are quick to look at the 15 percent figure, we must be cognizant of the fact that it does not represent the full scope of the issue or even the correct numbers. And more importantly, as we near this upcoming presidential election, we must remember that things like the Earned Income Tax Credit, food stamps and other beneficial programs would all be eliminated or greatly diminished under a Romney/Ryan plan. If we care about the poor and we want to continue reducing poverty rates, do we really think something like the Ryan plan which calls for cuts to Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, etc. is the way to go?

Read the rest of this essay on http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rev-al-sharpton/poverty-rate_b_1885259.html