

# U.S. Federal Policy to Advance Equitable Rural Development



Tony Pipa

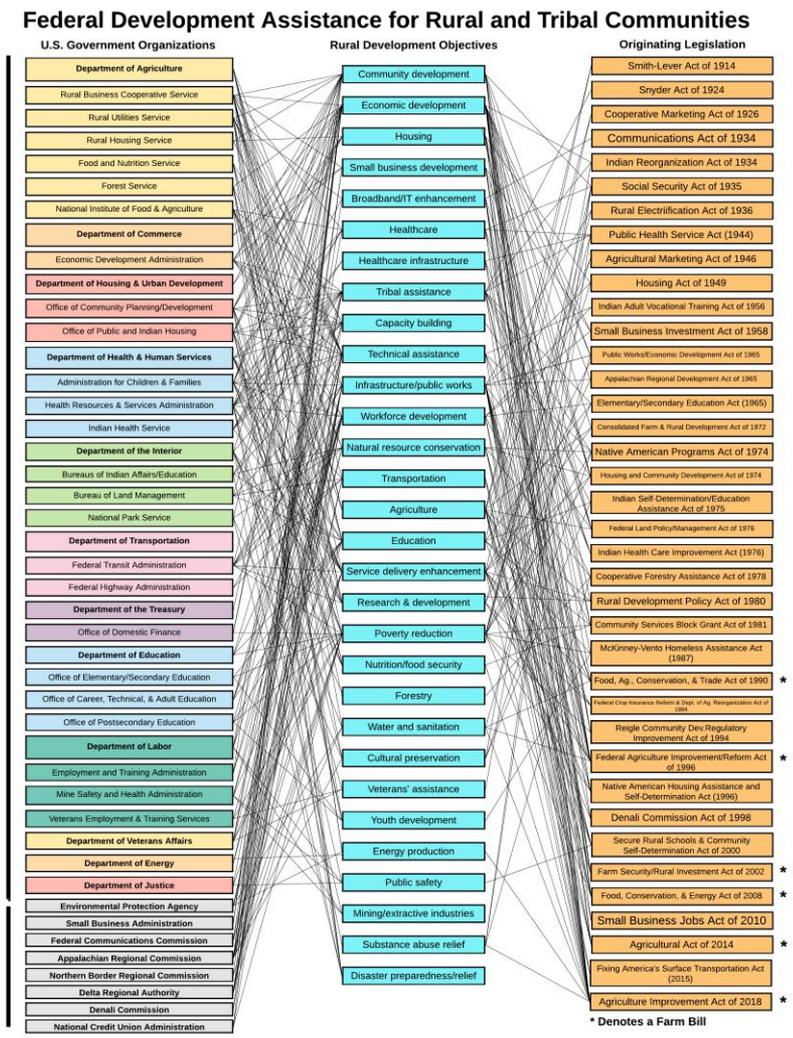
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# Today's Federal Policy: A fragmented & complex landscape

- ▷ Over 400 federal programs
- ▷ 13 departments
- ▷ 10 independent agencies
- ▷ Over 50 offices and sub-agencies

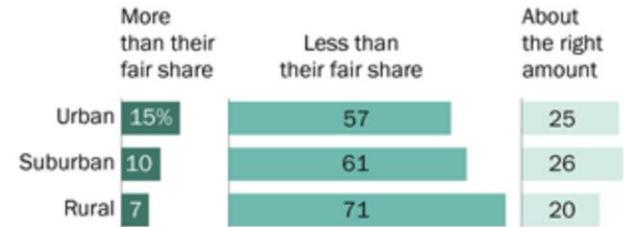


# Rural Skepticism of Gov Assistance

- “Many rural residents perceive their communities as the **victims of government decisions** that routinely ignore or misunderstand rural needs and **use rural resources to disproportionately help more privileged urbanites**” (Cramer Walsh 2012)
- “Panelists were **generally suspect of government and believed it failed to recognize or address the unique challenges facing rural America** or generally overlooked it placing more emphasis on urban and suburban America” (Rural Voter Institute)
- **COVID changing perceptions?**
- “8 out of every 10 rural residents want the same or an increased amount of federal [COVID] relief paid directly to individuals compared to current levels” (Yale)

## Broad agreement across community types that rural areas get less than their fair share of federal dollars

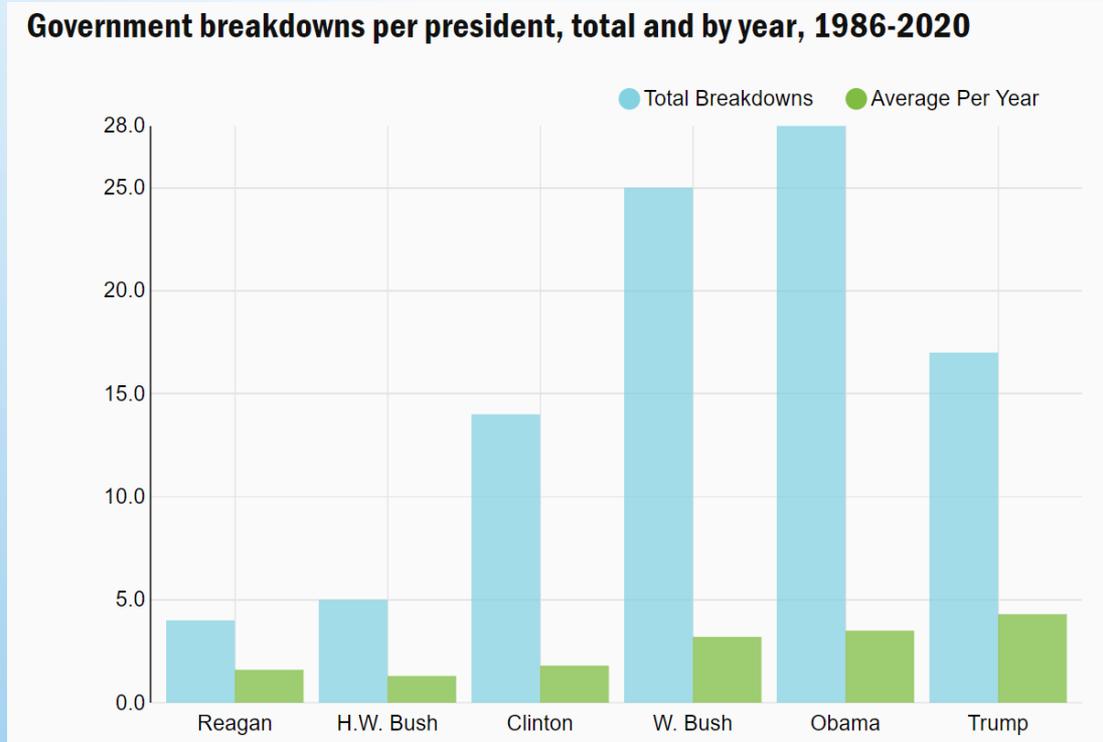
% of \_\_\_ residents saying that, when it comes to federal money, rural areas receive ...



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.  
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 26-March 11, 2018.  
"What Unites and Divides Urban, Suburban and Rural Communities"

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# Highly Visible Gov Breakdowns Breed Distrust

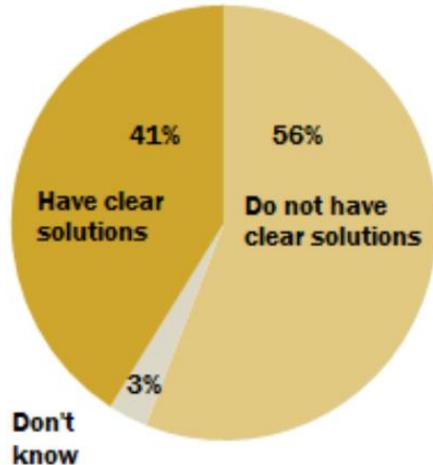


*“Trust in government...appears to be highly responsive to government breakdowns. Even if an occasional **breakdown** can be justified as the price of ambition, the recent acceleration creates a sense that the federal government cannot be trusted to meet minimal expectations for reliability and care”*

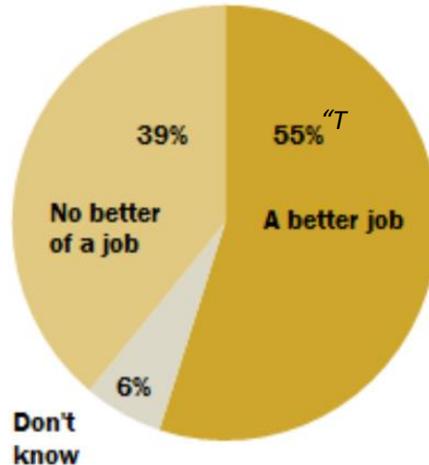
# More Faith in Ordinary People to Solve Problems

**How difficult are the problems facing the country, and could the public do a better job than elected officials?**

*Most big issues facing the country today ...*



*Compared with elected officials, job ordinary Americans would do solving the country's problems ...*



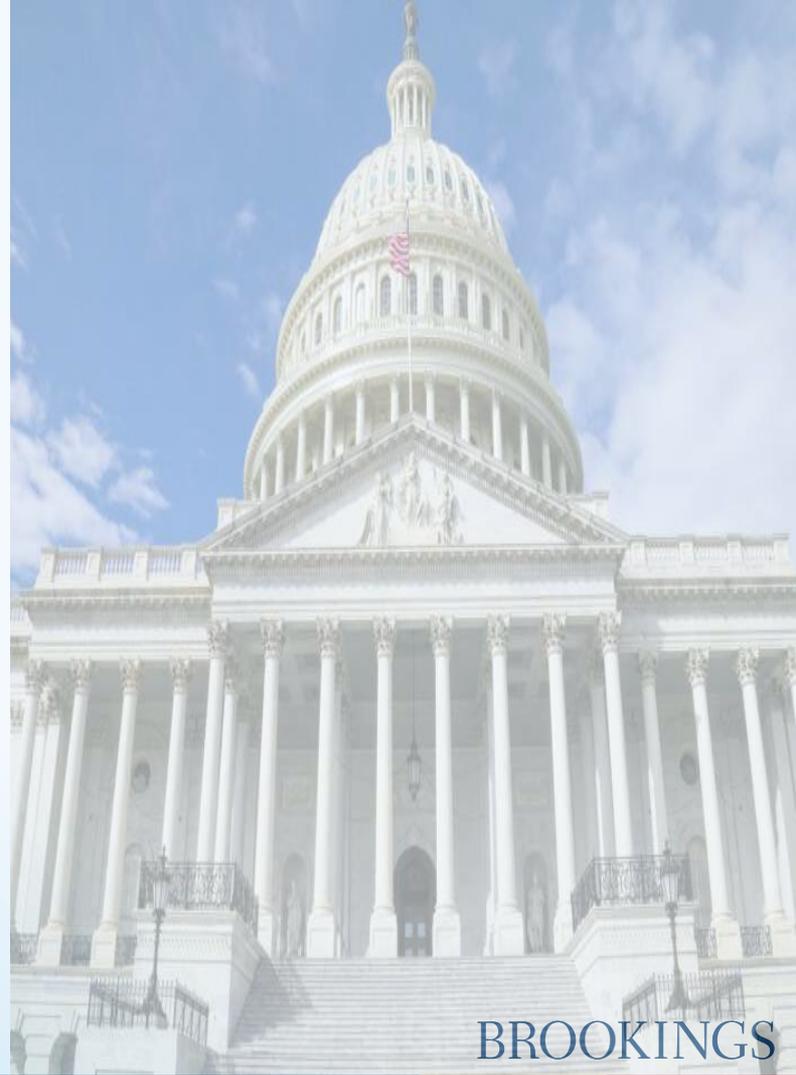
Survey conducted Aug. 27-Oct. 4, 2015. Q107t/u.  
Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

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*“Most Americans (56%) acknowledge that the problems facing the country do not have clear solutions. Even so, most (55%) also say ordinary Americans could do a better job of solving national problems than elected officials.”*

# Rural Policy Today: Early Signs

- ▶ Biden commitment
  - Dedicated staff at Domestic Policy Council
  - Rural outreach director in White House Public Affairs
- ▶ USDA leadership with new vision of rural development
- ▶ But...
  - Continuing barriers to public investment
  - Election/Democratic institutions under pressure
  - Agricultural influence dominates



# Today's Possibilities: American Rescue Plan

*(selected provisions)*

- ▶ **\$350 billion** for coronavirus state/local relief funds, with additional \$12 billion for capital projects fund and community navigator program
- ▶ **\$4 billion** in food supply chain and agriculture pandemic response funding
- ▶ **\$10 billion** for State Small Business Credit Initiative, with new set asides for very small businesses, socially/economically disadvantaged businesses, and TA
- ▶ **\$3 billion** for EDA Economic Adjustment Assistance program, with 25% set-aside for travel/tourism/outdoor recreation communities
- ▶ **\$1 billion** for farmers and ranchers of color
- ▶ **\$7 billion** to expand broadband through FCC
- ▶ **\$500 million** in emergency rural healthcare grants

# Today's Possibilities: American Jobs Plan

(selected provisions)

- ▷ \$5 billion for a **Rural Partnership Program**
- ▷ \$100 billion in **broadband** infrastructure
- ▷ \$31 billion for **small business**
- ▷ ~\$14 billion through EDA **Public Works** program, USDA/HUD **"Main Street"** grant initiatives, ARC **POWER** Initiative, DOE retooling grants for idled factories
- ▷ \$10 billion **Community Revitalization Fund** to support redevelopment projects
- ▷ Funding for vulnerable communities through FEMA's Building **Resilient Infrastructure and Communities** program, HUD CDBG, and other programs

*"Help rural regions, including Tribal Nations, build on their unique assets and realize their vision for inclusive community and economic development."*

*"This program will empower rural regions by supporting locally-led planning and capacity building efforts, and providing flexible funding to meet critical needs"*