

From *nola.com*:

Rep. James Clyburn: Opposition to stimulus is slap in face

By Page Ivey, Associated Press

Friday February 20, 2009

COLUMBIA, S.C. -- The highest-ranking black congressman said Thursday that opposition to the federal stimulus package by southern GOP governors is "a slap in the face of African-Americans."

U.S. Rep. James Clyburn, D-S.C., said he was insulted when the governors of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and his home state, which have large black populations, said they might not accept some of the money from the \$787 billion stimulus package.

Texas Gov. Rick Perry said Wednesday he would accept the money, and none of the others has rejected it outright. The Republican governors of Idaho and Alaska also said they had reservations about whether the money would come with too many strings attached, but Clyburn said he was particularly taken aback by southern governors who said they might decline it.

"These four governors represent states that are in the proverbial black belt," Clyburn said.

A spokesman for South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford accused Clyburn of playing the race card.

"Spending money at the federal level that we do not have represents a future tax increase on all South Carolinians, regardless of their color," Sanford spokesman Joel Sawyer said in an e-mail statement. "And in the process of doing so, he's ripping off everyone he claims to represent."

Speaking earlier Thursday on CBS' "The Early Show," Sanford said being against the stimulus plan doesn't preclude taking the money. He said he opposed President Barack Obama's economic plan because it's "a bad idea," but would look over it and decide whether some parts would work for South Carolina.

A message seeking comment was left with a spokesman for Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour. Kyle Plotkin, press secretary for Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal, who is the son of Indian immigrants, called Clyburn's comments absurd.

"Each state agency is reviewing the bill to determine what strings are attached to any funds coming to Louisiana," Plotkin said. "The governor has an obligation to look out for the interests of Louisiana's taxpayers and that is exactly what he will do."

Clyburn spokeswoman Hope Derrick later said Clyburn didn't mean he thought those governors were racially motivated in their opposition, but that rejecting stimulus money would hurt black residents.

Clyburn began his remarks to reporters Thursday by talking about the Juneteenth celebration, which marks when slaves in Texas finally learned they had been freed by the Emancipation Proclamation more than a year after it happened.

"Knowing my history and knowing Texas history, all of this, it was a slap in the face of African-Americans," Clyburn said.