

# A MORAL POLICY AGENDA TO HEAL AND TRANSFORM AMERICA: The Poor People's Jubilee Platform



**REPAIRERS**  
OF THE BREACH



**KAÏROS**  
THE CENTER FOR  
RELIGIONS, RIGHTS,  
AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

**JULY 2020**

# A MORAL POLICY AGENDA TO HEAL AND TRANSFORM AMERICA

*We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States. – Preamble to the U.S. Constitution*

*No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law, nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. – 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution*

*Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless. What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar? To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your riches? – Isaiah 10:1*

---

From Alaska to Arkansas, the Carolinas to California, Mississippi to Maine, Kansas to Kentucky, the Bronx to the Border, Appalachian hollers to Apache sacred lands, people are coming together to organize their moral outrage against systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, militarism and the war economy and the false narrative of religious nationalism into a powerful moral fusion movement. There are 140 million people who are poor and struggling against these injustices in the richest country in the world. A society sick with these interlocking injustices needs a voice rooted in our deepest Constitutional and moral values to remind us of who we are and who we must be.

We know that poverty and inequality kill 250,000 people every year in American and it is still not frontpage news. Alongside these unseen deaths, we have seen more than 130,000 deaths from the novel coronavirus. We have also witnessed the brutal murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Ahmaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks and untold others at the hands of state violence. For every day that we choose not to address the five interlocking injustices, there is a death measurement.

In 2018, the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival set forth a comprehensive Moral Agenda based on the needs and demands of the 140 million. For years we have been shifting the narrative and building power among the poor to create a compelling moral force for broad and bold systemic change. On June 20, 2020, millions of people tuned into the Mass Poor People's Digital Assembly and March on Washington to hear the reality facing the 140 million. Hundreds of thousands of people took action and forwarded these moral policy priorities to Congress and their state governors.

We now launch a Moral Policy Agenda to Heal America: The Poor People's Jubilee Platform. This platform proclaims that moral policy is also economically sound policy, because the 140 million are not only the hope of the poor. The least of these, who are, in actuality, most of us, can lead this country out of the pain we have been suffering. The rejected are leading a moral and economic revival to save the heart and soul of this nation.



---

The Poor People's Jubilee Platform is organized into five sections:

**Part I. Establish Justice and End Systemic Racism: The Right to Democracy and Equal Protection Under the Law**

**Part II. Promote the General Welfare: The Right to Welfare and an Adequate Standard of Living**

**Part III. Ensure Domestic Tranquility: The Right to Work with Dignity**

**Part IV. Secure the Blessings of Liberty: The Right to Health and A Healthy Environment**

**Part V. Provide for the Common Defense: Reprioritizing our Resources**

---

The Platform is grounded in these five principles:

1. **We need a moral revolution of values to repair the breach in our society.** This platform abides by our deepest Constitutional and moral commitments to justice. Where harm has been done, it must be acknowledged and undone.
2. **Everybody in, nobody out.** Too many people are hurting and we can't be silent anymore. Everybody is deserving of our nation's abundance.
3. **When you lift from the bottom, everybody rises.** Instead of "trickle-down," we start with the bottom up.
4. **Prioritize the leadership of the poor, low-income and most impacted.** Those who are on the frontlines of these crises must also be in the lead in identifying their solutions.
5. **Debts that cannot be paid must be relieved.** We demand freedom from servicing the debts we cannot pay.

---

Throughout our history, it has always been the role of moral movements to turn pain and righteous anger into a transforming force. From Abolition to Reconstruction and the organized outrage of the labor movement, women's movement, Civil Rights Movement and more, fusion movements have compelled governments to take transformative action. This happened when those movements brought diverse people together, resisted efforts to divide their members against one another and refused to narrow demands to what was seen as politically possible. Instead, they pushed for what was necessary and made that possible.

In the early 20th Century, roaring inequality and the Great Depression brought about mass unemployment, hunger and homelessness. Millions of people demanded government action to secure jobs, labor protections and the general welfare. The unemployed councils of the 1920s and 1930s and widespread popular resistance sowed the seeds of the Social Security Act, Federal Housing Administration, Works Progress Administration and the Tennessee Valley Authority. Some decades later, the Great Society of the 1960s reshaped the federal budget: it reduced military spending and increased funding for social welfare and entitlement programs, created Head Start, established Medicare and Medicaid and passed the National Environmental Policy Act. All of these programs redefined the role of government and harnessed the wealth of this country towards the needs of the poor. This did not happen haphazardly, but was brought about by the power of poor people taking action together.

We know that poor and dispossessed people will not wait to be saved. Instead, people are taking lifesaving action borne out of necessity to demand justice now. This is the force that is coming together in the Poor People's Campaign. In 46 states across the country, and together with 19 national faith denominations and more than 200 national partner organizations, we are demanding voting rights, guaranteed incomes, work with dignity, living wages, health care, clean air and water and peace in this violent world.

In 2018, the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival released the Souls of Poor Folk Moral Audit, which looked at how the injustices of systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, militarism and the war economy have evolved over the past 50 years. In 2019, we released the Poor People's Moral Budget and showed that if we implemented the demands of this Campaign, we could fundamentally revive our economy and transform our society.

The Poor People's Jubilee Platform now identifies legislative and policy priorities to heal this country. We have been investing in punishing the poor; we must now invest in the welfare of all. We have been investing in systemic racism and voter suppression; we must now invest in expanding democracy. We have been investing in killing people; we now must invest in life. We have been investing in the wealthy and corporations; we must now invest in the people who have built up this country and make it run every day, the 140 million and more who have been abandoned in an era of abundance.

*Somebody's been hurting our people, and it's gone on for far too long,  
and we won't be silent anymore!*

**Rev. Dr. William Barber II**

President, Repairers of the Breach; Co-Chair, Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival

**Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis**

Director, Kairos Center for Religions, Rights, and Social Justice;  
Co-Chair, Poor People's Campaign: National Call for Moral Revival

**Shailly Gupta Barnes**

Policy Director, Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival;  
Policy Director, Kairos Center for Religions, Rights and Social Justice

**Roz Pelles**

Strategic Advisor, Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival;  
Vice President, Repairers of the Breach

## **PART I. END SYSTEMIC RACISM AND ESTABLISH JUSTICE: THE RIGHT TO DEMOCRACY AND EQUAL PROTECTION UNDER THE LAW**

- 1. Protect and expand the right to vote.**
- 2. Protect and honor the rights of first nations, indigenous and native people.**
- 3. End the violence of police brutality and mass incarceration. Redirect resources towards impacted communities. Establish a National Truth Commission on Police Brutality and Mass Incarceration.**
- 4. Protect immigrant communities and recognize their place and role in our society. Demilitarize immigration and border enforcement.**
- 5. Protect democratically elected leadership from being undermined by unelected emergency financial managers who are brought in to resolve budget shortfalls.**
- 6. Secure quality, equitable and diverse public education and end the segregation of schools. Protect public education.**
- 7. Relieve student debt and provide free higher education for all.**

---

### **1. Protect and expand the right to vote.**

- Congress must pass a new law that protects and expands the right to vote. This includes reinstating key protections of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and updating the formula for preclearance to include historic and contemporary conditions of voter suppression. The pre-clearance formula must apply to:
  - Jurisdictions that were covered in the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
  - Jurisdictions that have enacted voter suppression laws since 2013.
- Establish the right to participation as an indicator of democracy.
  - Registration rates of racial and ethnic minorities, and poor and low-income eligible voters, must not be lower than the registration rates for the majority racial or ethnic group. Registration rates for any group must approach 80-100%.
  - Identify a federal authority to monitor election turnout, especially for racial and ethnic minorities and poor and low-income voters.
  - Support citizen redistricting efforts that prevent racist and partisan gerrymandering; establish more polling places; and ensure early voting in every state and vote by mail.
- Institute online registration, automatic voter registration, same day registration, early registration for 17-year-old and verifiable paper records.
- Expand the right to vote to the currently and formerly incarcerated.
- Federal judicial appointments must take into account nominated judges' histories of decisions on voting rights.
- Make Election Day a national holiday.

### **2. Protect and honor the rights of first nations, indigenous and native people.**

- Protect the rights of indigenous people to their lands and resources, the free exercise of their culture and religion, sovereignty for first nations and secure their human rights, Constitutional guarantees and treaty protections.
- Working with tribal and indigenous community leadership, direct adequate federal resources towards Indian Health Services and tribal schools, as well as towards indigenous and tribal housing, water, sanitation, utilities, cultural and other needs.
- With the meaningful engagement of impacted communities, cease all mining and extraction on indigenous and native lands.
- Establish a pre-requisite that assesses harms to the free expression of the right to religion for any federally authorized projects on native and indigenous land.

### **3. End the violence of police brutality and mass incarceration. Redirect resources towards impacted communities. Establish a National Truth Commission.**

- Demilitarize the police.
  - End the 1033 program that sends military equipment into local and state law enforcement. End all military training programs for local and state police.

- 
- Ban the use of force as a punitive measure or means of retaliation against people who are unarmed.
  - Enact federal legislation that allows federal murder charges, alongside any state charges, against officers who abuse their power to kill with racial or discriminatory intent. Enforce the duty of police officers to intervene where there is an excessive use of force. Any officer who does not intervene against the use of excessive force may be prosecuted as an accessory to the crime.
  - Hold local governments accountable for the actions of local law enforcement.
  - End mass incarceration.<sup>1</sup>
    - End cash bail, predatory fines and fees on the poor. Instead of criminalizing the poor to raise state and local revenues, raise taxes on the corporations and the wealthy and direct federal resources to state and local governments for unarmed, public health, mental health, EMT and social services emergency responders.
    - Stop locking people up for non-violent crimes and misdemeanors by replacing prison sentencing with community service and substance abuse treatment.
    - Issue renewed sentencing guidelines that reduce jail time and the incarcerated population.
  - Redirect resources from the military, policing and incarceration budgets towards the real security of our communities, including quality public schools, universal health care and decent jobs with living wages.
  - Establish a National Truth Commission on Police Violence and Mass Incarceration that is organized around grassroots and community-based forums to lift up the stories of suffering from impacted individuals, families and communities and their solutions on how we right these injustices.
    - This Commission will include people who are currently incarcerated, formerly incarcerated and their families and those impacted by police violence and mass incarceration. It will expose the realities of state violence in the police and prison system, hold perpetrators accountable and identify alternatives to the current justice system, prisons and policing. It will also connect this violence to other forms of policy violence that is present in our communities.
    - The experiences and insights of frontline communities and impacted people must direct federal policy on policing and incarceration. Their cries of pain must turn into the power to transform and reconstruct our society.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.brennancenter.org/issues/end-mass-incarceration/cutting-jail-prison-populations>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/want-reduce-mass-incarceration-do-no-harm-and-invest-people-and-communities>

---

#### **4. Protect immigrant communities and recognize their place and role in our society. Demilitarize immigration and border enforcement.**

- Remove immigration from the Department of Homeland Security.<sup>3</sup>
  - End the 287G program and collaboration between ICE collaboration with local law enforcement.
  - Redirect funds for ICE, CBP and the border wall towards reuniting families and securing appropriate documentation for and meaningful assistance to border communities. This includes securing drivers' licenses so people may work and live without fear of arrest, deportation or detention.
  - Repeal mandatory detention laws, end all remaining detention quotas, close all private detention centers and shadow detention centers, close child detention centers and implement alternatives to detentions to draw down the 52,000 people currently held in detention.
  - Implement an immediate moratorium on deportations and roll back the expanded deportation provisions of the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act.
  - Institute greater transparency and accountability around CBP, ICE, and DHS activity, especially around their engagements with local and state law enforcement.
- With the meaningful participation and engagement of stakeholders, including border communities and frontline immigrant justice organizations that are grounded in immigrant communities, establish an immigration system that prioritizes family reunification, job security, labor protections and the general welfare of the citizens and residents of the U.S.
  - Establish a timely and accessible path to citizenship that permits undocumented immigrants to remain with their families.
  - Expand eligibility of federally funded social welfare and assistance programs to include immigrant populations.
  - Extend the CARES Act and COVID-19 legislative response to include all immigrants and their children.
  - Repeal the Public Charge Rule that threatens the immigration status of immigrants who receive public benefits.<sup>4</sup>
- Redirect funds for building a wall at the U.S.-Mexico Border towards meaningful assistance to border communities.
  - Decriminalize border communities.
  - Create a framework for internal and external oversight of federal border and immigration agencies.

#### **5. Protect democratically elected leadership from being undermined by unelected emergency financial managers who are brought in to resolve budget shortfalls.**

- Implement a federal moratorium on emergency manger / emergency financial manger laws. These laws are used to take over local

---

<sup>3</sup>After the September 11, 2001 attacks, the Immigration and Naturalization Service or INS was divided into U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP). It also moved from the Department of Justice to the newly created Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Immigration thereby became a question of national security. ICE's strategic plan for 2003-2012, Operation Endgame, stated its purpose was to, "promote the public safety and national security by ensuring the departure from the United States of all removable aliens through the fair and effective enforcement of the nation's immigration laws." <https://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/issues/detention-101>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.uscis.gov/news/fact-sheets/public-charge-fact-sheet>



---

budgets and resources, often in minority majority cities. The managers who are appointed have broad powers to dismiss elected officials, renegotiate contracts, privatize public assets and impose new taxes, but they are unaccountable to voters.

- Remove emergency managers who have been appointed through these laws.
- Dissolve takeover boards that have been implemented through these laws.
- Return governing responsibilities to local and state elected officials.
- To prevent these un-democratic takeovers, secure the fiscal health of local and state governments that are facing budget crises.
  - Establish automatic stabilizers to release an infusion of federal funds when there are signs of fiscal distress. Indicators of fiscal distress include: unemployment,<sup>5</sup> poverty and low-income rates, race and age demographics, population decline, home prices and vacant housing stock, population on public assistance, public school budgets, law enforcement budgets, bond holdings on public assets and capital/labor ratio.<sup>6</sup>
  - Stabilizers will trigger:
    - Moratoriums on municipal, local or state debt servicing to financial institutions, requiring investors to carry the loss, rather than citizens and residents.
    - Moratoriums on evictions, rent hikes, utility shut offs and family separation.
    - An immediate release of funds to state and local governments to secure economic stability, including support for: expanded unemployment insurance, welfare programs, health care, childcare, and payroll needs for state and local governments; public school funding (teaching / administration salaries and capital expenditures); jobs programs that target communities in distress and more.
    - An increase in taxes on corporations and financial institutions.
  - Stabilizers may also trigger, as necessary: an expansion of FEMA and other critical agencies to provide appropriate services, access to national stockpiles and authorization of the Defense Production Act.
- Establish local oversight systems to ensure that resources are being used to resolve the fiscal crisis, rather than serving financial interests. There must be no profiteering off fiscal crises and budgetary distress.

---

<sup>5</sup> The primary trigger would follow the “Sahm rule,” which says that an economy is in a recession when the 3-month average unemployment rate is 0.5% points higher than its level in any of the previous 12 months. According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, this indicator has occurred early in every recession back to the 1970s and has never given a false reading indicating a recession when none has followed. This “trigger on” period can be paired with a “trigger off” period, including when all 3 of the following conditions are met: (1) the 3-month average unemployment rate has fallen for 2 straight months; (2) the 3-month average unemployment rate is below a certain threshold for 2 straight months; and (3) the 3-month average unemployment rate is less than 1.5 % points higher than its rate when the measure was triggered on. <http://www.cbpp.org/research/economy/fiscal-stimulus-needed-to-fight-recessions>

<sup>6</sup> Based on indicators listed in The New Minimal Cities, Michelle Wilde Anderson, Yale Law Journal (2014).

---

## **6. Secure quality, equitable and diverse public education and end the segregation of schools. Protect public education.**

- Establish quality, equitable and diverse public education as a legal right.
  - Increase federal funding for early childhood education, Head Start and Early Head Start to be able to enroll all eligible children.
  - Increase federal funding for public K-12 schools that enhances public education.
    - Funding formula must consider: poverty rates, homelessness, unemployment rates, connectivity and the percentage of the population that receives federal assistance, including SNAP, WIC, LIHEAP, housing assistance, SSI or SSDI.
    - Minimize the use of testing as a standard of achievement and funding.
    - Identify federal resources to support substantive efforts to desegregate schools and school districts by race, income and ability.
  - Disasters and crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, must not be used to harm or put at risk the safety, education, and emotional development of students, families, teachers and faculty.
- Increase and secure resources for school infrastructure and the development of teachers / administrators, including:
  - Technology infrastructure that can provide reliable and secure online and remote learning options to support public education, rather than replace it.
  - Recreational facilities or other infrastructure to support extra-curricular and after school activities in poor and low-income communities and school districts.
  - Arts, music and cultural programming for poor and low-income schools.
  - Increased funding to support students with disabilities and English language learning programs.
- Support teacher training and education with higher wages for public school teachers in poor and low-income communities that are competitive with private and charter schools and expand loan forgiveness programs for public school teachers.
- Protect and expand the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

## **7. Relieve student debt and provide free higher education for all.**

- Provide federal resources to ensure that public colleges, technical programs and higher education can be free for everyone who wants to attend.
  - Establish new federal investments in higher education to eliminate the costs of tuition and fees at every public 2 and 4 year college in the country for poor and low-income students.
  - Invest more resources in Pell Grants to cover room, board and non-tuition expenses and to expand who is eligible to receive these grants.
  - Establish resources to support graduate school costs, including non-tuition expenses, for poor and low-income students.
  - Establish 100% debt forgiveness for all borrowers earning less than \$50,000; up to \$50,000 of debt forgiveness for borrowers earning less than \$100,000; and proportionally less debt relief for those earning up to \$250,000. Waive all interest payments.<sup>7</sup>
- Allocate federal resources to higher education programs and institutions to train poor and low-income students for the Jubilee Jobs Program. (See Part III on The Right to Work with Dignity.)
- Place limits on how much private colleges and universities receive from federal taxpayer dollars.

---

<sup>7</sup>This provision applies to federal loans and includes the federal repurchase and repayment of private loans up to the designated amount.

## **PART II. PROMOTE THE GENERAL WELFARE: THE RIGHT TO WELFARE AND AN ADEQUATE STANDARD OF LIVING**

- 1. Change the poverty measure to reflect current conditions.**
- 2. Establish a universal and guaranteed adequate Income.**
- 3. Redefine welfare as a right that strengthens our society and provides for the general welfare.**
- 4. Protect and expand Social Security, Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance.**
- 5. Secure housing for all.**

---

### **1. Change the poverty measure to reflect current conditions**

- Redefine poverty in terms of economic security<sup>8</sup> and the ability to meet basic needs. At a minimum, the official poverty measure must be pegged to the median cost of living and take into account:
  - Income required to meet housing, utilities, food, transportation, childcare, personal and household items, healthcare and education needs.<sup>9</sup>
  - Access to financial services and financial security, including savings, retirement provisions, tax credits, debt and other liabilities.
  - This new measure will determine eligibility and the level of assistance for federal welfare, assistance and entitlement programs. All of these programs – including guaranteed adequate income, direct cash assistance, SNAP, WIC, social security, SSI, SSDI, unemployment insurance or others – must ensure an adequate standard of living that is measured by this new threshold.
- Until a more accurate poverty assessment is developed, 199% of the Supplemental Poverty Measure poverty threshold or 199% of the Official Poverty Measure poverty threshold will be used to determine federal appropriations and allocations.

### **2. Establish a universal and guaranteed adequate income.**

- Ensure monthly direct cash assistance of at least \$2000 per person to adults, plus \$1000 for children.
- Include tax filers w/ITINs, SSN, dependent adults, children over 17 and college students.
- These payments are not to be counted as income against other federal assistance programs.
- Include an opt-out mechanism for individuals with incomes over a specific threshold, at least 400% over the median income.
- Include a care income to recognize the economic contribution of routine housework, childcare, tending to the elderly and other household members and other unpaid activities related to household maintenance and caregiving.

### **3. Redefine welfare as a right that strengthens our society and provides for the general welfare.**

- Establish a guaranteed entitlement of the poor to a direct cash-assistance program that supports poor and low-income households.
  - Encourage the maximum feasible participation of participants.
  - Ensure that payments go directly to primary caregivers, rather than primary wage earnings.
  - Prohibit the use of any funds allocated to welfare spending to go towards family separation or child removal.

---

<sup>8</sup> The Window of Opportunity study shows that most Americans define poverty in terms of economic security. <https://www.opportunityagenda.org/explore/resources-publications/window-opportunity-ii/define-poverty>

<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.epi.org/resources/budget/budget-map/> and <https://iwpr.org/publications/best-us-2018/> for estimates of household income to meet the needs of various size households. Estimates range from \$33,100 for a single working adult to upwards of \$120,000 for a family of 4 in the DC metro area. The cost of thriving index estimates a threshold of \$54,400 to account for the costs of housing, health care, transportation and college for a family of four. <https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2020/02/the-cost-of-thriving/>



- Repeal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).
- Fully fund and expand SNAP and other assistance programs like the CTC and EITC that provide assistance directly to the poor.
  - Increase the maximum allocations in SNAP beyond the “thrifty food budget” to account for the dramatic loss of jobs, income and wide spread economic insecurity, especially following the pandemic.
- Expand and fully fund the Childcare and Development Block Grants to meet the childcare and early childhood development and care needs of poor and low-income families.
  - Use these resources to reinstate the over 300,000 jobs lost in the childcare sector in April 2020.
  - Expand and fully fund Head Start to be able to enroll all qualified children, including children who are eligible but not enrolled in Early Head Start.
- Eligibility for all social welfare programs must be based on a universal standard that is not burdensome to prove.
  - Use an income threshold set by the updated poverty measure, above.
  - Remove lifetime limits, work requirements, and other mechanisms that limit the eligibility of recipients beyond the universal standard for eligibility.
  - Extend social welfare benefits to immigrants and the formerly incarcerated.
  - Include special provisions and accommodations to meet the needs of people with disabilities, indigenous and native people, LGBTQ+ people and others who have a hard time accessing and enrolling for public benefits.
- Funding for all welfare and public assistance programs must be indexed for inflation on an annual basis.
- Establish participatory oversight to engage recipients of welfare benefits in welfare programs at all levels of governance.

#### **4. Protect and expand Social Security, Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance.**

- Ensure that SS, SSI and SSDI payments secure an adequate standard of living as measured by the new poverty measure.
- Protect and expand these provisions in times of crisis, e.g., economic crisis, health crisis, etc., to ensure that people on fixed incomes are able to take care of their needs.
- In the case of an economic downturn, the Treasury must transfer the necessary funds to offset in full any losses to ensure that these payments continue to be made and provide for an adequate standard of living.

#### **5. Secure housing for all.**

- Acknowledge the true extent of homelessness to establish housing policies that can account for all the homeless.
  - Take into account the population that is homeless any given night; the sheltered homeless population who are living in shelters, transitional housing and tent cities; and those who have lost their homes and transitioned into the home of others. This total approaches 10 million people, rather than the 500,000 routinely cited.
- Establish the Housing First program to end homelessness by providing housing for all.
  - Mobilize public resources and capacity to turn vacant units into affordable public housings. Work with community-based organizations

- 
- to identify vacant units, especially those owned by financial institutions, to convert into public housing. Apply the best lessons of Community Land Trusts to secure public land and resources that are dedicated towards public housing.
- Build new public housing as part of the Jubilee Jobs Program. (See Part III on the Right to Work with Dignity.)
  - Protect and expand housing and rental assistance to poor and low-income households, including Section 8 housing.
  - Minimize the use of shelters, which are often unsafe, unsanitary and overcrowded.
  - Prevent further homelessness.
    - Ensure that the costs of housing are within the income abilities of every household through the other provisions of this platform that provide for expansions in welfare, guaranteed adequate incomes, work with dignity, living wages and non-discrimination.
    - Stop all evictions, including for those living in encampments and vehicles.
    - Prohibit rent increases that are incommensurate with economic conditions and household ability to pay. Prohibit the imposition of any late fees on mortgages and housing payments.
    - Curb speculation in housing markets that drives up the costs of housing.
  - Impose penalties on Wall Street, real estate corporations and other institutions that have profited from the housing and financial crisis of 2008-9. These penalties will be directed towards the Housing First program and federal rental assistance.
  - Establish public accountability and transparency mechanisms around tax breaks and other subsidies that go to economic developers for luxury housing.

## **PART III. ENSURE DOMESTIC TRANQUILITY: THE RIGHT TO WORK WITH DIGNITY**

- 1. Update the unemployment measure and expand unemployment coverage.**
- 2. Institute living wages and economic security for all workers.**
- 3. Establish the Jubilee Jobs Program, a federal jobs program to secure full employment as a right.**
- 4. Secure the right to free association and the right to form and join unions.**

---

**1. Update the unemployment measure.**

- Base all federal assessments, allocations and appropriations on the U-6 measure of unemployment to account for structural changes in our labor force.
- Make the changes to unemployment insurance coverage that were implemented through the CARES Act permanent:
  - Expand unemployment coverage to include gig workers, self-employed workers, part-time workers and other categories of workers who are normally ineligible for unemployment insurance.
  - Incentivize work-sharing and short-term compensation programs to allow employers to avoid layoffs by reducing hours and workers to collect unemployment benefits for lost hours.
  - Extend the number of weeks that unemployment insurance may be collected.

**2. Institute living wages and economic security for all workers.**

- Raise the federal minimum to \$15/hour.
- Establish that the minimum wage must correspond to a real housing wage, which in 2019 was approximately \$23/hour. Make concrete plans to raise the minimum wage to \$23/hour or the current housing wage in no less than two years; once established, index the real housing wage to inflation and adjust annually.
- Legislate equal pay for equal work and make it mandatory under federal law.
- All workers must have paid family leave, paid sick leave, hazard pay, personal protective equipment and living wages.

**3. Establish the Jubilee Jobs Program, a federal jobs program to secure full employment as a right guaranteed to all Americans and people willing to work in this country.**

- Prioritize socially beneficial industries / occupations, with massive investments childcare and caregiving, education, healthcare, housing, mass transit, water / utilities, infrastructure jobs and cultural production. Prioritize deindustrialized communities and poor and low-income communities in rural areas, small towns and indigenous areas.
  - All jobs in this program will provide living wages, worker protections and union rights. They will also give workers in these programs a leading voice in their design and implementation.
  - Jobs will also provide pension support and early retirement support for those who choose / can no longer work, especially for workers who are being transitioned from fossil fuel jobs.
- Specific sectors within the Jubilee Jobs Program will include:
  - Community Care Corps: This sector will work with communities to expand health care training and resources for community-based health care programs in poor, low-income and rural and native communities, including nursing, mental health, substance abuse treatment, EMT and other medical training programs. It will also include repairing, reopening and rebuilding full access rural hospitals and community care clinics. (See Part IV on the Right to Health and a Healthy Environment.)



- 
- Green Jobs Corps: This sector will focus on environmentally sustainable infrastructure jobs that address water / sanitation / utilities, broadband and communications, expanding public housing that is climate resilient and energy efficient and retrofitting existing housing to be climate resilient and energy efficient. It will also include jobs that focus on sustainable agriculture, land protection/restoration and food production. (See Part IV on The Right to Health and a Healthy Environment.)
  - Housing First: This sector will focus on converting vacant properties into affordable public housing and also building new affordable public housing units.
  - Together We Thrive: This sector will focus on education, schools, teaching and administration in failing schools and cities, towns and rural areas in fiscal distress.
  - Jubilee jobs Arts and Culture Corps: This sector will focus on art, music, and cultural work in poor and low-income communities.
  - Universal Tech Corps: This sector will focus on training and placement in ICT, R/D and automation sectors that prioritize poor and low-income communities to prepare a new generation of ICT workers and researchers who are grounded in these communities.
  - Include job training and placement programs to support employment in socially beneficial industries. These training programs will be housed at public colleges, technical schools and other higher education institutions and enroll poor and low-income students alongside workers who have been displaced.
  - Make specific allocations and resources available for native, indigenous and tribal communities and first nations, especially those that have lost land or resources from polluting industries, extraction or military engagement. Give these communities and nations a leading voice in identifying needs, program design and implementation.

#### **4. Secure the right to free association and the right to form and join unions.**

- Ensure the vast majority of workers are able to form and join unions.
- Enable sectoral and geographic forms of bargaining;
- Extend NLRB, FLSA, and OSHA protections<sup>10</sup> to include all workers: informal workers; independent contractors; self-employed workers; undocumented workers; workers with disabilities; incarcerated workers; and workers designated as “essential” workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Establish the NLRA as the floor, rather than the ceiling, for the rights of workers to organize. Enable states and local governments to go above and beyond the NLRA to empower worker organizing programs.
- Expand protections for workers who organize, including increased penalties for companies that violate workers’ rights, especially for low-wage and service sector workers and undocumented workers.

---

<sup>10</sup> Key provisions of the New Deal and post war years that were ostensibly created to uplift and protect workers have negatively impacted large segments of the workforce, most notably domestic and agricultural workers. These categories of workers are some of the lowest paid, and more often than not are jobs occupied women and people of color. They are also disproportionately located in the Southern states.

## **PART IV. SECURE THE BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY: THE RIGHT TO HEALTH AND A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT**

- 1. Protect and secure health care for all.**
- 2. Expand our public health care infrastructure and capacity.**
- 3. End medical debt.**
- 4. Secure access to water and utilities for all.**
- 5. Declare climate change a national emergency.**
- 6. Establish a Green Jobs Corps within the Jubilee Jobs Program.**
- 7. Make a full, financial assessment of the environmental damage knowingly caused by fossil fuels and extractive industries.**

---

## **1. Protect and secure health care for all.**

- Expand Medicaid in the 14 states that have not expanded under the Affordable Care Act. Expand Medicaid coverage to include those who currently fall into coverage gaps.
- Establish a universal, single player health care system that provides health care to all, regardless of income, disability, prior health conditions, employment status, immigration status or any other characteristic that is used to deny eligibility for health care coverage.
- Protect and secure Medicare from cuts to funding.
- Fund and expand Indian Health Services to the full extent necessary to meet current and future needs of indigenous, native and tribal people.
- Expand Veterans health care to make sure it meets the needs of our veterans.
- Allocate specific resources for COVID-19 vulnerable populations, including testing, treating and hospital care for people who are homeless, incarcerated, detained or in congregate care at nursing homes and other care facilities, undocumented immigrants and essential workers on all the frontlines of this pandemic.

## **2. Expand our public health care infrastructure and capacity.**

- Move federal resources and capacity towards re-opening hospitals that have been closed in the past ten years, prioritizing hospitals in poor, low-income, rural and native communities.<sup>11</sup> Use these national resources to also ensure that hospitals at risk of closure remain open.
- Update hospitals in poor, low-income, rural and native communities so they are equipped to provide the best possible modern medical care, including expanded dental care, mental health and recovery programs.
- Nationalize production and distribution of critical health equipment so that all hospitals are able to meet current and future medical needs.
- Establish a public health communications infrastructure to enable hospitals and medical centers in poor, low-income, rural and native communities to communicate, learn and share medical expertise with hospitals and health care professionals in other parts of the country and world. This includes resources to digitize and update health records systems.
- Expand resources for CDC, NIH and other national research institutions to study health impacts of poverty, inequality and ecological devastation.
- Establish a Community Care Corps as part of the Jubilee Jobs Program that will work with communities to expand health care training and resources for community-based health care programs in poor, low-income, rural and native communities. (See Part III on the Right to Work with Dignity.)

---

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.shepscenter.unc.edu/programs-projects/rural-health/rural-hospital-closures/>

---

### 3. End medical debt.

- Establish a federal relief fund to end all medical debt, especially for poor and low-income people.
- Resource the relief fund by imposing penalties on the past and future profits of insurance companies, pharmaceutical companies, device manufacturers and other health care companies.

### 4. Secure access to water and utilities for all.

- Implement a national moratorium on water and utility shut offs.
- Issue a national order to turn water and lights back on. Reinstate all utility services that have been shut off in the past 12 months.<sup>12</sup>
- Institute a national income-based water / utility affordability plan.<sup>13</sup>
  - Plan must implement affordable rates for poor and low-income households, ways to solve high-bill problems and a public assessment process to make sure it is meeting its intended goals.
  - Write off all water and utilities debt for households that have lost services in the past 12 months or are at least 2 months past due on payments.
  - Fund in part by imposing penalties on profits gained by private water utilities' and water bottling companies that have been operational in the U.S. within the past ten years.
- Restore federal funding to public local water systems.
  - Raise at least \$35 billion per year that is dedicated to drinking and wastewater improvements.<sup>14</sup>
  - To receive federal funding, state and local governments must end water and utilities shut offs and reinstate services that have been disconnected.
  - Direct national resources and capacity to rebuild water, sanitation and utilities infrastructure.
- Return private water and utilities services, management and operations to the public sector.

### 5. Declare climate change a national emergency.

- Redefine “critical infrastructure” as infrastructure necessary for a 100% renewable and climate resilient economy. This includes a modern smart grid that can manage and support 100% renewable energy use. This infrastructure must be publicly owned, controlled and distributed.

---

<sup>12</sup> Detroit reinstated water service during the pandemic for a minimal \$25 fee. This may be an appropriate model to follow for a national program to reinstate water services that have been shut off in the past 12 months. <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2020/03/11/detroit-water-services-coronavirus-out-break/5023680002/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://baltimore.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3769175&GUID=4A3F24AF-7CC7-442B-86C5-B01AF0A148F7&FullText=1>

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/sites/default/files/fs\\_1902\\_waterjobsjustice-wateractupd2-web.pdf](https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/sites/default/files/fs_1902_waterjobsjustice-wateractupd2-web.pdf)



- 
- Prohibit construction and expansion of any new pipelines, refineries and coal oil and gas export terminals; ban fracking, mountaintop removal coal mining, coal ash ponds and offshore drilling.
  - End federal fossil fuel subsidies.
  - Allocate federal resources towards climate research and climate crisis mitigation strategies that are working and that can be scaled up.
  - Rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement and become a global leader on climate reduction goals.
  - Repeal and prohibit rule-making that reverses or weakens federal policies on emissions or climate protections.

**6. Establish a Green Jobs Corps within the Jubilee Jobs Program.**

- Target poor and low-income communities that have been reliant on fossil fuels, extraction and polluting industries and/or experienced ecological devastation and climate crisis. These jobs will provide pension support and early retirement support for those who choose / can no longer work, especially for workers who are being transitioned from fossil fuel jobs.
- Projects will include: expanding water, utilities and sanitation services; infrastructure development (roads, bridges, broadband and communications); updating and retrofitting public housing to ensure that it is climate resilient and energy efficient; recycling/composting; sustainable agriculture, land restoration and protection; expanding and strengthening public mass transit; installing solar panels; building wind turbines, advanced batteries and the hardware and software of smart grids, and more.

**7. Make a full, financial assessment of the environmental damage knowingly caused by fossil fuels and extractive industries.**

- Target fossil fuel companies, agribusiness and other large GHG emitters, including military-industrial contractors; asset management firms with significant fossil fuel holdings; financial institutions with significant loans to fossil fuel companies; insurance companies with significant coverage of fossil fuel companies' risks; consulting companies, software companies and retailers who have contracted services with fossil fuel companies; and households that constitute the top 0.01% of wealth holders in the U.S.
- Implement a penalty on these institutions and actors that is on top of the tax provisions in Part V on Providing for the Common Defense. They must be held responsible for their role in accelerating and profiting from the climate crisis.
- Redirect this wealth towards the clean-up costs and responsibilities of establishing a 100% renewable and climate resilient economy, including the Green Jobs Corps, and other social programs indicated in this platform.

## **PART V. PROVIDE FOR THE COMMON DEFENSE: REPRIORITIZING OUR RESOURCES**

- 1. End the culture of war.**
- 2. Demilitarize our communities.**
- 3. Implement fair taxes and penalties on the wealthy, corporations and Wall Street.**
- 4. Relieve the debts of those who cannot pay.**
- 5. End the practice of profiteering from crisis.**
- 6. Work to close the racial wealth divide.**

---

## 1. End the culture of war.

- Cut military spending by at least \$350 billion in one year.<sup>15</sup> This includes the following:
  - The U.S. operates 800 bases in 90 countries, ten times more than the rest of the world combined. Closing 60% of these bases (roughly 480 bases) and allowing corresponding troop reductions will save \$90,000,000,000.
  - Ending the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere, and bringing our troops home will save \$66,000,000,000.
  - Canceling new procurement and reducing the use of weapons systems that are obsolete, ineffective or in excess of reasonable security needs will save \$57,900,000,000.
  - Developing new treaties for complete nuclear disarmament, destroying U.S. nuclear stockpiles (including a \$4 billion annual budget for implementation), canceling nuclear delivery systems (bombers, submarines) and canceling planned nuclear upgrades will save \$42,800,000,000.
  - Convert the Military Health System into a universal health care system. Providing universal health care will provide medical care to troops and their families and allow separate funding for military health care to be funneled into that system. This will save \$33,300,000,000.
  - Military overhead increased from \$57,400 per active duty service member in 1980 to \$152,300 in 2015 (in 2015 dollars). A 10% reduction in these overhead costs could be achieved primarily through a reduced reliance on for-profit contractors and reduced use of fossil fuels to save \$27,000,000,000.
  - Ending foreign military financing programs that enable authoritarian governments and human rights abuses will save \$14,000,000,000.
  - The 2018 military research and development budget increased by 11% since 2015 (adjusting for inflation). A smaller military will require less R&D. A mere 10% reduction will bring R&D back to roughly the 2015 level and save \$10,400,000,000.
  - Replace military personnel in support positions with civilians. Transitioning up to 80,000 military positions providing support and administrative functions to civilian employment will save \$3,000,000,000.
  - The Pentagon has requested a process to close domestic bases it says it doesn't need. Closing unneeded domestic bases could save \$2,000,000,000.
  - Canceling the Space Force; cutting military construction by 10% to meet needs of smaller military; converting U.S.-based military elementary and secondary schools to public schools will all save \$3,100,000,000.
- Shift the emphasis in our foreign policy towards diplomacy, relieving foreign debt relief and humanitarian assistance.
- Recognize that broad economic sanctions function as acts of war and end these sanctions where they are in place, including on Iran, North Korea, Cuba, Venezuela, Sudan and Syria.
- Do not reauthorize the Budget Control Act when it expires in 2022. Delink military spending from social welfare spending and redirect military resources that have been cut towards securing basic needs here at home, as indicated in this platform.

---

<sup>15</sup> Poor People's Moral Budget, p. 104.

---

## 2. Demilitarize our communities.

- Implement policy priorities from Part I on End Systemic Racism and Establish Justice to demilitarize the U.S.-Mexico border and end police brutality and mass incarceration.
- End the easy access to firearms that are militarizing our communities and legislate enhanced mandatory background checks.

## 3. Enact fair taxes on the wealthy, corporations and Wall Street to raise over \$880 billion per year (nearly \$8.9 trillion over ten years).<sup>16</sup> Implement additional penalties for wealth that has been wrongfully gained from crisis.

- Fair taxes on the wealthy will raise nearly \$6.3 trillion over 10 years and includes the following:
  - Surtax on all income of millionaires. A 5.5% surtax on total annual income, including investment income, above \$1 million (\$500,000 for singles) will raise at least \$500,000,000,000.
  - Raise the top individual tax rate to 70%. The top marginal rate was reduced from 39.6% to 37% in 2017. A 70% tax rate on income above \$10 million will restore the top marginal tax to post-war economic boom levels and raise \$353,000,000,000.
  - Tax income from investments at the same rate as income from work. The top rate on income from investments (long-term capital gains and dividends) is currently just 20%, significantly lower than the 37% top marginal tax rate on ordinary income. If investments were taxed the same rate as income from work, this will raise \$1,500,000,000,000.
  - Strengthen the estate tax. Closing loopholes and applying graduated rates to estates worth more than \$3.5 million (\$7 million per couple) will raise \$400,000,000,000.
  - Annual wealth tax on the very wealthiest. A 2% on fortunes exceeding \$50 million and a 3% tax on fortunes exceeding \$1 billion will raise \$2,750,000,000,000.
  - Tax capital gains from sales of inherited assets. Subjecting inherited assets to a capital gains tax will raise \$780,000,000,000.
- Fair taxes on corporations will raise close to \$1.7 trillion over 10 years and includes the following:
  - Restore the corporate tax rate to 35%. The 2017 tax reform law slashed the corporate tax rate from 35% to 21%. Restoring it to the pre-2017 levels will raise \$1,300,000,000,000.
  - Repeal tax breaks for fossil fuels. This will raise \$10,000,000,000 and support the move away from a fossil fuel-based economy.
  - Repeal new tax breaks for pass-through income. The 2017 tax reform law provided a 20% deduction for “pass-through” business income, more than 80% of which will go to the richest 5% (e.g., hedge and private equity fund managers and corporate law firm partners). Repealing this measure will raise \$387,000,000,000.
- Fair taxes on Wall Street will raise \$880 billion over 10 years and includes the following:
  - Institute a financial transaction tax. Taxing Wall Street trades would discourage risky, short-term speculation, while encouraging longer-term, job-creating investment by raising \$777,000,000,000.

---

<sup>16</sup> Poor People's Moral Budget, p. 53-61.



- 
- Levy on big banks. A small tax of 0.15% on the liabilities of banks with assets of \$50 billion or more would encourage less risky investments and help prevent future bail-outs that siphon resources away from social needs. This measure will also raise \$103,000,000,000.

- Implement additional penalties will go towards federal funding to support the Jubilee Jobs Program, meeting housing needs, ending medical debt and implementing a national water affordability program. Penalties will target: wealth gained by corporations, financial institutions and wealth from the climate crisis, the 2008-9 foreclosure crisis; wealth gained by health insurance companies, health care providers and pharmaceutical companies from the Covid-19 pandemic, the opioid crisis and hospital closures; wealth gained by private water utilities and water bottling companies that have been operational in the U.S. within the last ten years.

#### **4. Relieve the debts of those who cannot pay them.**

- Require lenders to write off debts that cannot be paid. This includes forgiveness of medical debt, housing debt,<sup>17</sup> water and utilities debt and student debt. Waive all interest payments.
- End payments on municipal and other bonds for cities and states that are in fiscal crisis. These bonds funnel public resources towards servicing debt – rather than meeting critical public needs - and must be relieved. Waive all interest payments.

#### **5. End the practice of profiteering from crisis.**

- Federal resources to address economic, social or public health crises must first be directed towards the needs of the poor and most marginalized and cannot go to lobbyists, insurance companies, financial institutions, pharmaceutical companies, wealthy corporations or otherwise be used to increase the wealth of Wall Street, corporations and the wealthy.
- Stop banks from freezing accounts and garnishing payments from poor and low-income individuals.
- Increase federal protections from predatory lending.

#### **6. Work to close the racial wealth divide.**

- Establish a “Baby Bonds” program that provides bonds for each American child, regardless of race, valued at between \$500 and \$50,000, depending on the parents’ wealth level.

---

<sup>17</sup> During the pandemic, the mayor of Detroit implemented a “pay as you stay” program to eliminate fees and interest payments on housing. While pitched as a temporary assistance program, it is a model that may be applied to the national crisis of affordable housing. <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2020/03/02/whitmer-signs-tax-break-poor-detroiters-into-law/4927589002/>

## APPENDIX A

*This appendix identifies costs and investments associated with each section of the Poor People's Jubilee Platform. These are drawn primarily from the Poor People's Moral Budget: Everybody Has the Right to Live!*

### PART I. End Systemic Racism and Establish Justice: The Right to Democracy and Equal Protection Under the Law.

- Automatic voter registration: **\$150 million per year for five years or \$750 million** total to the Election Assistance Committee to provide funding to states to create, protect and improve voting systems and allow people to update their voter information online or through automated telephone-based systems. With automatic registration in place, same-day voter registration will impose negligible additional costs.<sup>18</sup>
- Based on an early voting study in New York, a national early voting system will cost approximately **\$211 million the first year** and **\$57 million** for each additional election.<sup>18</sup> This amounts to \$449 million over five years.
- Efforts to improve voting technology, reduce cyber-security vulnerabilities and update voting systems to produce individual and auditable paper ballots is estimated by the CBO to be **\$1.5 billion over five years**.<sup>20</sup>
- The National Taxpayers Union has estimated the cost of statehood for Washington D.C. at just **\$9 million**. Because Congress has long prohibited the District from imposing a nonresident income tax, the removal of this constraint as a result of D.C. gaining statehood could bring in as much as **\$2.26 billion** in additional annual revenues.
- The Congressional Progressive Caucus estimates that \$1.1 trillion could fund a 10-year increase for educational programs such as Head Start and early education, Youth Summer Jobs, Pell Grants, Social Security Block Grants, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Drop-out Prevention, the Early Learning Challenge Fund, and on-the-job training programs. This includes a commitment to invest in teachers and schools (**\$244 billion over ten years**) and support preschool for all (**\$82 billion over ten years**).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> "Cost Estimate: H.R.1 For the People Act of 2019," Congressional Budget Office (CBO), March 1, 2019, <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2019-03/hr1.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Caroline Iosso et al., "The Cost of Progress for New York's Voters," Citizens Union of the City of New York, May, 2018. <http://citizensunion.org/portfolio-item/the-cost-of-progress-for-new-york-voters/>; see Poor People's Moral Budget, p. 21.

<sup>20</sup> "Cost Estimate: H.R.1 For the People Act of 2019," Congressional Budget Office (CBO), March 1, 2019, <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2019-03/hr1.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> "Hunter Blair, "The People's Budget: Analysis of the Congressional Progressive Caucus budget for fiscal year 2019," Economic Policy Institute, July 24, 2018, <https://cpc-grijalva.house.gov/uploads/CPC%20The%20People's%20Budget%202019%20final.pdf>.

- A National Bureau of Economic Advisors study on the effects of K-12 education found that the effects of bringing all students up to a basic level of achievement on standardized tests **could grow the economy by \$32 trillion** over a long-term, 80-year timeframe.<sup>22</sup> Quality early learning programs can return \$7.30 to the economy for each dollar invested.<sup>23</sup>
- According to a 2013 CBO analysis, immigration reform that would increase the number of new immigrants who are allowed to enter the country and provide a path for many currently undocumented people to gain legal documentation would have resulted in new federal **costs of \$26 billion per year or \$262 billion over the 10 years from 2014-2023**, but those costs would have been more than **balanced by roughly \$46 billion per year or \$459 billion over ten years** in increased revenues, largely from increased income and payroll taxes.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, a 2016 study from the National Bureau of Economic Research found that providing legal documentation and status to currently undocumented workers would increase their **contribution to GDP from 3% (about \$615 billion per year using today's GDP) to 3.6%, a \$123 billion increase.**<sup>25</sup>

The one-year costs of instituting automatic voter registration, early voting, and securing statehood for Washington D.C. amount to \$740 million. **This is less 1/1000 of the \$750 billion military budget authorized by the Senate in 2019.**

Without these protections of our right to democracy, we can expect elected officials to favor the interests of a few over the interests of the poor. We can expect politicians to vote against expanded health coverage, costing up to **\$310 billion in lost savings in a publicly funded, single-payer health care system.** We can expect states to continue to block efforts to implement living wages, squandering from **\$328 billion to \$1 trillion in lost wages.**

If this assault on democracy continues, we can expect more disasters like Flint, where an entire city of 99,000 were poisoned to **save \$5 million.** Between health costs, legal fees, lawsuits, the impact on children, and the costs of federal intervention, nearly half a billion dollars was spent over that \$5 million.<sup>26</sup> This was not a unique incident. The emergency manager law in Michigan was applied to Detroit's public schools for 18 years,

<sup>22</sup> Eric A. Hanushek, Jens Ruhose, and Ludger Woessmann, "Economic Gains for U.S. States from Educational Reform," National Bureau of Economic Research, December 2015, <https://www.nber.org/papers/w21770.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> Poor People's Moral Budget, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> "S. 744: Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act," Congressional Budget Office (CBO), June 18, 2013, <https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/113th-congress-2013-2014/costestimate/s7444.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> Ryan Edwards, Francesca Ortega, "The Economic Contribution of Unauthorized Workers: An Industry Analysis," Regional Science and Urban Economics 67 (2017): 119-134, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2017.09.004>.

<sup>26</sup> Josh Sandburn, "Flint Water Crisis May Cost the City \$400 Million in Long-Term Social Costs, Time, August 8, 2016, <http://time.com/4441471/flint-water-lead-poisoning-costs/>; Chris Boyette, "Michigan and Flint Agree to Replace 18,000 Home Water Lines by 2020," CNN, last modified March 27, 2017, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/03/27/us/flint-settlement/>; Robert Acosta, "State to Provide \$4.1M to Screen, Test Flint Children Affected by Lead," MLive, April 9, 2018, [https://www.mlive.com/news/flint/2018/04/state\\_providing\\_4\\_million\\_to\\_s.html](https://www.mlive.com/news/flint/2018/04/state_providing_4_million_to_s.html); "EPA Awards \$100 Million to Michigan for Flint Water Infrastructure Upgrades," Environmental Protection Agency, March 17, 2017, <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-awards-100-million-michigan-flint-waterinfrastructure-upgrades>.

---

during which time a \$90 million debt ballooned to nearly ten times as much, to **\$890 million**. During this same time, the city created private charters and closed nearly half of its public schools.

If we do not secure equal protection under the law, we can expect mounting costs of criminalizing immigration, including for Border Patrol (**\$4.2 billion**), ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (**\$3.9 billion**), and deportations (**\$3.7 billion**), to the **\$25 billion** estimated for the wall along the southern border, and **\$123 billion in lost contributions to GDP**. We can expect to spend **\$179 billion** spent every year on policing, courts, prisons and payments to private prison operators through mass incarceration, which are borne across all levels of government. We can expect that **\$78 billion to \$87 billion will be lost** to GDP due to reduced employment opportunities following incarceration, while families of incarcerated people continue to pay **\$2.9 billion** every year for fees, phone calls and other charges implemented by private communications contractors.

---

## PART II. Promote the General Welfare: The Right to Welfare and an Adequate Standard of Living

- Instituting a new poverty measure will require more resources to the U.S. Census Bureau to update the measure and capacity to survey the American population, including populations that are more difficult to reach, such as indigenous and native communities, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+, and immigrants.
- The costs of an annual guaranteed income must be covered in part by a wealth tax as well as investments in ensuring the economic security of the 140 million people who are poor or low-income in the U.S. today. Much of the layout in the guaranteed income would be returned to the economy as recipients spend the resources to meet their needs. This is also true of a care income. It is estimated that women's share of unpaid labor would total \$1.5 trillion in this country – and over \$10 trillion around the world.<sup>27</sup> Establishing a care income that recognized the economic contributions of unpaid labor would ultimately infuse at least **\$1.5 trillion** into our economy.
- Investing **\$52 billion per year** could reduce child poverty by 57%, Black child poverty by 65%, and improve economic conditions for 95% of all poor children.<sup>28</sup>
- Universal early learning and childcare support would require **\$100 billion per year**, which is substantially less than the **\$130 billion per year** that could be generated if we merely restored the corporate tax rate to the pre-2018 level of 35%.

---

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/03/04/opinion/women-unpaid-labor.html?referringSource=articleShare>

<sup>28</sup> Children's Defense Fund, "Ending Child Poverty Now."

- Allocations for a new cash assistance program must be indexed to inflation. Currently TANF is funded at **\$16.5 billion**, but its funding has not increased since 1996 and it only serves one in four eligible families. This means that a new cash assistance program must be funded by least four times the current TANF funding level, or **\$66 billion**, and be expanded to meet the new poverty threshold.
- Allocating **\$6 billion** towards housing as part of a ten-year, \$2 trillion infrastructure program<sup>29</sup> would contribute towards 2.5 million jobs in its first year and boost GDP by \$314 billion.<sup>30</sup>
- The American Housing and Economic Mobility Act calls for investing **\$488.5 billion** over 10 years towards the housing crisis, specifically.<sup>31</sup> It would allocate:
  - \$445 billion over 10 years into a Housing Trust Fund
  - \$25 billion over 10 years to a Capital Magnet Fund to finance affordable housing, as well as day care centers, workforce development center, and health clinics in low-income neighborhoods
  - \$10 billion over 10 years for infrastructure and development needs related to new housing
  - \$2 billion over 10 years to homeowners with negative equity in their homes
  - \$2 billion over 10 years for tribal housing needs
  - \$523 million over 10 years for rural homeownership and rental homes

According to the Mailman School of Public Health, **250,000 people die every year** from poverty and inequality. This is more than the number of deaths attributed to either heart attacks or lung cancer.<sup>32</sup> Further, the costs of **child poverty alone** have been estimated to be **over \$1 trillion or 5.4% of GDP and 28% of all government spending in 2015**.<sup>33</sup> This includes:

- \$192 billion in increased health costs and spending on special education
- \$294 billion in reduced earnings
- \$200 billion in increased victimization costs of street crime
- \$122.5 billion in increased corrections and crime deterrence costs
- \$83 billion in increased social costs of incarceration
- \$92 billion in increased child homelessness
- \$37 billion in child maltreatment costs.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> “21st Century New Deal for Jobs,” Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC), May 25, 2017, <https://cpc-grijalva.house.gov/21st-century-new-deal-for-jobs>.

<sup>30</sup> Poor People’s Moral Budget, p. 42.

<sup>31</sup> “American Housing and Economic Mobility Act,” National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), March 13, 2019, <https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Warren-HEOM-Bill.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> Sandro Galea, et al, “Estimated Deaths Attributable to Social Factors in the United States,” American Journal of Public Health, August 2011, Vol 101: No. 8.

<sup>33</sup> Michael McLaughlin and Mark R. Rank, “Estimating the Economic Cost of Childhood Poverty in the United States,” Social Work Research 42, no. 2 (June 2018): 73, <https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/svy007>.

<sup>34</sup> These costs are all made in 2015 dollars.

---

This remains an underestimate, because it is based on the number of children who live below the official poverty line. In 2015, that totaled 9.6 million children or 13% of all children. Under an expanded definition of poverty and using 2018 figures, we measure 38.5 million children or 52% of all children who are poor or one emergency away from being poor. This is **four times greater** than the population numbers used to calculate the \$1 trillion cost and could mean that the costs of child poverty are many times more.

---

### **PART III. Ensure Domestic Tranquility: The Right to Work with Dignity**

- One proposal for a federal jobs guarantee calculates the government cost at **\$543 billion per year to employ 10.7 million workers**. Under this plan, the government would cover compensation and benefits, the employer's share of payroll taxes and supplies, and capital goods related to employment, thereby minimizing private costs.<sup>35</sup>
- A \$15 federal minimum wage enacted immediately would raise pay for 49 million workers by a combined **\$328 billion per year**. If this was scaled up to the real housing wage of \$22 per hour, **83 million workers would get \$1 trillion** more in pay.
- Closing the gender pay gap would cost **\$513 billion per year** to employers who are not paying fair wages and bring this money back into the national economy. Closing the racial pay gap would cost **\$2.1 trillion per year** to employers who are perpetuating systemic racism and bring these earnings back into the economy.
- Restoring the right to unionize would put **\$150 billion in wages and unionized rates** back into the pockets of workers.<sup>36</sup>
- An investment of **\$2 trillion for infrastructure development over 10 years** would provide in its first year:
  - \$35 billion to replace aging drinking water pipes and wastewater systems,
  - \$10 billion for investment in broadband technology;
  - \$10 billion to repair and modernize schools;
  - \$35 billion for transit networks;
  - \$39 billion for roads and bridges;
  - \$50 billion for energy investments;
  - \$6 billion for affordable housing;

---

<sup>35</sup> Poor People's Moral Budget, p. 36. This specific proposal, however, assumes a lower minimum wage (\$11.83/hour) than the \$15/hour this legislation recommends

<sup>36</sup> Poor People's Moral Budget, p. 37.

- 
- \$6 billion for airports, ports and waterways;
  - \$3.5 billion for Indian Country and public lands; and
  - \$3 billion for veterans' affairs.

In its first year, this proposal could be expected to **create 2.5 million jobs** building our nation's infrastructure. An infrastructure investment of \$100 billion leads to an estimated increase in GDP of \$150 billion. Using this rule of thumb, **an annual \$200 billion investment could result in an annual GDP boost of \$314 billion.**

- The costs of expanding only high-capacity broadband to every unserved community in the country could cost anywhere **from \$20 billion to \$80 billion**, but the social and economic returns of such an investment would be manifold. According to an analysis by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), **the agricultural benefits alone of expanding rural broadband e-connectivity would equal \$18 billion in annual economic returns.**

At a minimum, a federal jobs guarantee and infrastructure development plan will require **\$743 billion per year**. We can estimate, also, that the costs to employers of equal wages and unionized wages would be another **\$2.7 trillion**. On the other hand, the cost of existing pay gaps totals at least **\$2.7 trillion per year in lost wages**, continued gender and race inequality, and widening income and wealth inequality. Despite promises that workers would reap huge benefits from the Republican tax cuts, corporations have used most of their windfalls to enrich wealthy shareholder and CEOs, blowing a record setting \$1 trillion on stock buybacks that inflate the value of their own shares.<sup>37</sup>

Without a \$15 minimum wage, **workers lose an estimated \$328 billion per year** and put increasing pressure on our social welfare programs. In fact, if real living wages translate into substantial savings for public assistance programs. According to a University of California, Berkeley study, public assistance programs spend **\$153 billion a year** as a direct result of low wages, most of which could be saved by legislating a living wage. These measures will not replace the need for welfare, but work alongside a social welfare system that is appropriate for today's economy.

---

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2018/12/17/investing/stock-buybacks-trillion-dollars/index.html>



---

## PART IV. Secure the Blessings of Liberty: The Right to Health and a Healthy Environment

- According to the University of Massachusetts' Political Economy Research Institute (PERI), as of 2017, the U.S. was spending about **\$3.24 trillion** on personal health care. This is 17% of total U.S. GDP, while 9% of U.S. residents have no insurance, and 26% are underinsured.<sup>38</sup> The PERI study estimates that Medicare for All could reduce total health care spending in the U.S. by about 9%, to \$2.93 trillion, while covering all Americans.<sup>39</sup> In order to achieve these lower overall costs, a single payer system must shift costs from individuals and businesses to government. The result is a net savings on health care amounting to **\$278 billion in 2017**. Another analysis by Dean Baker<sup>40</sup> shows that Medicare for All would cost \$38.6 trillion over the next 10 years, annualized at \$3.86 trillion per year. Under this estimate, the government would use the \$20 trillion it is currently expected to spend on health care toward this total, leaving **\$1.8 trillion** in new government spending each year.
- Expanding Medicaid in the 14 states that have not yet expanded Medicaid access under the Affordable Care Act will cost **approximately \$25 billion in the first year**.<sup>41</sup> These costs would be subsumed by the costs of a single payer plan once implemented.
- The National Congress of American Indians has called for an increase from its current funding of \$5.6 billion in federal funds and \$1.2 billion in reimbursements through Medicaid and other programs, for a **total of \$36 billion phased in over 12 years**.<sup>42</sup>
- According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. needs a drinking water safety investment of \$472.6 billion over 20 years for water supply infrastructure, including pipes, drinking water storage tanks, purification facilities, and other infrastructure. The total includes \$3.8 billion for Indigenous and Native water systems.<sup>43</sup> For sanitation, a 2016 EPA study estimated a need for \$271 billion over 20 years<sup>44</sup> for wastewater and storm water infrastructure, which includes installing, maintaining, upgrading, or replacing sewage

---

<sup>38</sup> Robert Pollin et al., "Economic Analysis of Medicare for All," Political Economy Research Institute, November 30, 2018, <https://www.peri.umass.edu/publication/item/1127-economic-analysis-of-medicare-for-all>.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Dean Baker, "Can We Pay for Single Payer?," Democracy Journal, September 14, 2017, <https://democracyjournal.org/arguments/can-we-pay-for-single-payer/>.

<sup>41</sup> Stan Dorn, Megan McGrath, and John Holahan, "What Is the Result of States Not Expanding Medicaid? Timely Analysis of Immediate Health Policy Issues," Urban Institute, August 2014, [www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/22816/413192-What-is-the-Result-of-States-Not-Expanding-Medicaid-.PDF](http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/22816/413192-What-is-the-Result-of-States-Not-Expanding-Medicaid-.PDF).

<sup>42</sup> David Montgomery, "What Do Native Americans Want From a President?," Washington Post Magazine, May 13, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/magazine/wp/2019/05/13/feature/what-do-native-americans-want-from-a-president/>

<sup>43</sup> In 2015 dollars. "Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs Survey and Assessment: Sixth Report to Congress," U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Office of Water, Report EPA 816-K-17-002, March 2018, [https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-10/documents/corrected\\_sixth\\_drinking\\_water\\_infrastructure\\_needs\\_survey\\_and\\_assessment.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-10/documents/corrected_sixth_drinking_water_infrastructure_needs_survey_and_assessment.pdf).

<sup>44</sup> "Clean Watersheds Needs Survey 2012: Report to Congress," U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Office of Water, Report EPA-830-R-15005, January 2016, [https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-12/documents/cwns\\_2012\\_report\\_to\\_congress-508-opt.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-12/documents/cwns_2012_report_to_congress-508-opt.pdf).

---

pipes, sewage treatment facilities and storm water infrastructure, as well as sewer overflow control measures.<sup>45</sup> In today's dollars, this amounts to a current cost of \$284.9 billion.<sup>46</sup> Combining these numbers – the drinking water investment of \$472.6 billion over 20 years, and the inflation-adjusted wastewater and storm water investment of \$284.9 billion over 20 years – the total needed capital investment is **\$757.5 billion over 20 years**, which comes to about **\$38 billion a year**.

- Additional benefits of investment in water infrastructure that are harder to quantify as a dollar amount include indirect benefits of the resulting reduction in utility bills, such as reduction in homelessness, better school attendance and educational outcomes, and improved worker productivity.<sup>47</sup>
- To address water affordability, a proposed WATER Act draws on the 2005 water affordability plan from Detroit for the Detroit Water and Sewage Department and would institute comprehensive federal water safety measures to rebuild infrastructure, address water contamination and implement affordability measures. Investments would total **\$35 billion** a year and would **create 1 million jobs**.<sup>48</sup>

The cost of shifting the U.S. power grid to 100% renewable energy over the next ten years is estimated to be **\$4.5 trillion or approximately \$450 billion per year**. This includes replacing nuclear and fossil fuels with renewable energy, while keeping hydro, biomass and geothermal, constituent with a 100 percent renewables vision. It also includes construction and operation costs, capacity payments, investments in transmission and distribution infrastructure and delivering customer-facing grid technology.<sup>49</sup>

The costs of addressing climate change, building a just and green economy, and investing in robust health care system for all are **still less than** extensive costs of inaction and tinkering around trying to improve our flawed systems, currently in place. It is estimated that inaction on climate change could cost up to 15.7% of GDP per year.<sup>50</sup> That's the equivalent of wiping out **\$3.3 trillion** from the U.S. economy every year — the rough

---

<sup>45</sup> Almost 860 legacy wastewater and storm water systems combine discharges from domestic sewage, industrial effluent, and runoff from precipitation into a single stream. When excess precipitation occurs, the volume of combined wastewater and storm water can overwhelm a system, causing untreated or partially treated sewage to be discharged into rivers and lakes. These incidents are called combined sewer overflows (CSOs). "Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs)," U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), accessed May 21, 2019, <https://www.epa.gov/npdcs/combined-sewer-overflows-csos>.

<sup>46</sup> Using price index obtained from: "Producer Price Index by Commodity for Final Demand: Total Government Purchased Capital Investment (Goods, Services, and Construction) [WPSFD49404]," FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, December 10, 2018, <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/WPSFD49404>.

<sup>47</sup> Roger Colton, "Water Bill Affordability for the City of Philadelphia: Presented to Philadelphia City Council," April 9, 2015, <http://povertylaw.org/files/docs/Colton%20City%20Council%20comments--April%208%202015--Final.pdf>.

<sup>48</sup> "Water. Jobs. Justice. The Case for the Water Affordability, Transparency, Equity, and Reliability Act," Food and Water Watch, February 2019, [https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/sites/default/files/fs\\_1902\\_waterjobsjusticewateractupd2-web.pdf](https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/sites/default/files/fs_1902_waterjobsjusticewateractupd2-web.pdf).

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/renewable-us-grid-for-4-5-trillion>

<sup>50</sup> Solomon Hsiang et al., "Estimating Economic Damage from Climate Change in the United States," *Science* 356, no. 6345, (2017): 1362-1369, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aal4369>.

---

equivalent of five Great Recessions, the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.<sup>51</sup> This does not include the 400,000 deaths worldwide that can already be attributed to climate change. By 2030, this number is projected to reach 700,000.<sup>52</sup>

The loss of life is accompanied by massive health care costs, including individual payments to private insurance and out of pocket expenses totaling **\$1.69 trillion** and **\$539 million**<sup>53</sup> lost annually on medical costs for common waterborne diseases. It will also mean **\$112 billion**<sup>54</sup> in lost contributions to GDP from failures to invest in water infrastructure and the jobs it would create.

---

## PART V. Provide for the Common Defense: Reprioritizing Our Resources

### Military

- We could save as much as **\$350 billion per year** by cutting current Pentagon spending for fighting endless wars, maintaining a world-wide network of 800 military bases, stoking dangerous arms races, and subsidizing for-profit corporate contractors, and our military budget would still be larger than that of China, Russia, and Iran combined.
- For every dollar spent on diplomacy and humanitarian aid in 2020, the U.S. spent \$16.65 on the military.<sup>55</sup>
- Eliminating the Enforcement and Removal Operations budget immigration spending and reducing the CBP budget to 1976 levels (based on per-agent costs) could result in estimated savings of **\$14 billion annually**, including \$3.9 billion from decreasing border patrols, and, up to \$3.7 billion from ending deportations.<sup>56</sup>
- A study of mass incarceration of migrants estimated that jail and prison costs (excluding court costs) for criminal prosecutions for entering or reentering the United States totaled **\$7 billion**.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> Poor People's Moral Budget, p. 95.

<sup>52</sup> Poor People's Moral Budget, p. 87.

<sup>53</sup> "Waterborne Diseases Could Cost over \$500 Million Annually in U.S.," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), July 14, 2010, <https://www.cdc.gov/media/pressrel/2010/r100714.htm>.

<sup>54</sup> Use 2.95 multiplier as indicated in Poor People's Moral Budget, p. 89

<sup>55</sup> <https://ips-dc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/No-Warming-No-War-Climate-Militarism-Primer.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> Poor People's Moral Budget, p. 108.

<sup>57</sup> Judith A. Greene, Bethany Carson, and Andrea Black. Indefensible: A decade of mass incarceration of migrants

- The U.S. could also realize a one-time savings of up to **\$25 billion** from not building or fortifying physical barriers such as walls or fences at the U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>58</sup>
- According to the Prison Policy Initiative (PPI), the U.S. system of mass incarceration costs governments \$179 billion every year (including policing, courts and prisons, and payments to private prison operators).<sup>59</sup>
- According to a study by the Center for Economic and Policy Research, loss of employment following incarceration leads to a reduction **of \$78 billion to \$87 billion** in lost GDP.<sup>60</sup>

According to the “No Warming, No War” report from the National Priorities Project, the 2020 military budget was 272 times larger than the federal budget for energy efficiency and renewable energy.<sup>61</sup> Compared to the **\$6.4 trillion** spent on war since 2001, we could shift the U.S. power grid to 100% renewable energy over the next decade for **\$4.5 trillion**.

### **Taxation and Wealth Inequality**

- Fair taxes on the wealthy, corporations, and Wall Street could generate as much as **\$88 billion** per year in revenue to meet urgent social and environmental needs.
- Just restoring the corporate tax rate to pre-2017 levels of 35% would raise **\$1.3 trillion** over ten years
- The Baby Bonds program could be funded with just one capital gains tax on fortunes that are passed on to heirs of the wealthy. This would raise an estimated **\$78 billion** per year of the estimated **\$80 billion** required for this program and make progress towards addressing the racial wealth gap.<sup>62</sup>

By ensuring that the wealthy and large corporations pay their equitable share, we will reduce the extreme inequality that is corrupting our democracy and direct resources towards securing our universal and basic needs in today’s economy and climate environment.

<sup>58</sup> Jordain Carney, “GOP senators introduce bill to give Trump \$25 billion for border wall,” The Hill, December 6, 2018, <https://thehill.com/homenews/senate/420021-gop-senators-introduce-bill-to-give-trump-25-billion-forborder-wall>.

<sup>59</sup> Peter Wagner and Bernadette Rabuy, “Following the Money of Mass Incarceration,” Prison Policy Initiative, January 25, 2017, <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/money.html>.

<sup>60</sup> Cherrie Bucknor and Alan Barber, “The Price We Pay: Economic Costs of Barriers to Employment for Former Prisoners and People Convicted of Felonies,” Center for Economic and Policy Research, June 2016, <http://cepr.net/images/stories/reports/employment-prisoners-felonies-2016-06.pdf>.

<sup>61</sup> <https://ips-dc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/No-Warming-No-War-Climate-Militarism-Primer.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> Lynn Parramore, “Baby Bonds: A Plan for Black/White Wealth Equality Conservatives Could Love?,” Institute for New Economic Thinking, October 25, 2016, <https://www.ineteconomics.org/perspectives/blog/baby-bonds-a-plan-for-black-white-wealth-equality-conservatives-could-love-1>.