There are more than 1,407,710 poor and low-income voters in New Jersey and 85 million across the nation. Together, we account for one-third of the electorate. Together, we can ensure that the days of poverty and low-wages - and the unnecessary cruelty of abandonment amidst abundance - are numbered. Together, we can revive the heart and soul of this democracy to ensure dignity and justice for all. Forward together, not one step back!

Poverty and Low Wages

Key Resources

Rolling Back on Basic Needs

Health Care and the Pandemic

Militarism

Compensation

Key Resources

Poverty and Low Wages

Living Wage Calculator: https://livingwage.mit.edu/

Weeks of Work to Afford Housing: https://mitr.web


Household and student debt: https://www.newyorkfed.org/microeconomics/edhec.html

Democracy

Militarism

Health Care and the Pandemic

Rolling Back on Basic Needs

Religious and moral texts are clear that making policy that does not protect the rights of the poor and puts the cause of the wealthy first is evil and wrong. Isaiah 10 says, "Woe to those who legislate evil, who make unjust laws to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed." Jeremiah 22 reminds us, "Thus says the Lord: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor those who have been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the immigrant, the orphan, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place." Matthew 25 tells us, "Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me."

Indeed, the first governing principle of the US Constitution is to establish justice.

If we do not want to enable this wrongdoing, we must speak out and stand up against it. This is why the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival is organizing across the nation: to reveal these injustices, change the narrative, and build our power.

Fight Poverty, not the Poor!

In 2019, before the pandemic hit, 140 million Americans were living in poverty or just one emergency away from economic ruin: 60% of Black people (24 million), 64% of Hispanic/Latino people (38 million), 40% of Asian people (8 million), 60% of Indigenous and Native people (2 million) and 33% of white people (66 million).* These tens of millions of people live in every region, state and county in the country. Poverty was the fourth leading cause of death, claiming more lives than homicide, gun violence, diabetes or obesity. Long-term poverty was responsible for 295,000 deaths a year - or over 800 deaths a day.

The pandemic fostered in these fissures, taking root in systemic racism, poverty, the denial of health care, ecological devastation, wealth inequality and rampant military spending. During the first two years, governments at all levels responded to the crisis by expanding access to health care, housing, water, food and utilities. These overdue changes proved that in the world's richest country, we can ensure a dignified life for all. But these pandemic programs were temporary. When they ended abruptly, poverty and related interlocking injustices began to rise once again.

While millions of people remain without work, living wages, housing, clean water, food or health care, corporations and the wealthy are doing exceedingly well. Between 2020-2022, billionaire wealth grew by $1.5 trillion - more than $2 billion a day.

Poor People’s Campaign

A NATIONAL CALL for MORAL REVIVAL

NEW JERSEY FACT SHEET • 2023

Religious and moral texts are clear that making policy that does not protect the rights of the poor and puts the cause of the wealthy first is evil and wrong. Isaiah 10 says, "Woe to those who legislate evil, who make unjust laws to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed." Jeremiah 22 reminds us, "Thus says the Lord: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor those who have been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the immigrant, the orphan, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place." Matthew 25 tells us, "Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me."

Indeed, the first governing principle of the US Constitution is to establish justice.

If we do not want to enable this wrongdoing, we must speak out and stand up against it. This is why the Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival is organizing across the nation: to reveal these injustices, change the narrative, and build our power.

Fight Poverty, not the Poor!

*The PPC:NCMR created this fact sheet using the most comprehensive and current publicly available data through May 2023. Where possible, data is disaggregated to reflect the complex reality of the interrelated injustices contained in this document. Unfortunately, there are significant gaps in racial, ethnic and other demographic data, reflecting gaps in data collection and statistical methodologies, which the PPC:NCMR cannot control. We continue to push for improvements to fill those gaps.
IN NEW JERSEY:

Poverty and Low-Wages: Poverty is a policy choice, reflecting both low wages and high costs of living. These two conditions make it hard to meet basic needs and easy to fall into debt. In New Jersey:
- Between 2018-2020, there were 3,158,000 poor and low-income people, accounting for 36.1% of the population.**
- To meet their basic needs, a household with two adults and two children needs to earn over $28 per hour. However, the current minimum wage is just $14.13 per hour. At this wage, an individual must work 95 hours/week to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment.
- There are 1,126,877 people, or 25.3% of the workforce, earning less than $15/hour. This includes 1,003,527 adults and 14.3% of Asian and Native workers, 36.2% of Black workers, 45.6% of Hispanic workers, 17.8% of white workers, 31.9% of working women, and 42.6% of working women of color.
- Average household debt rose 5% in 2022 to an average of $63,230.
- Average student loan debt held by households was $5,940 at the end of 2022.

Rolling Back on Basic Needs: Pandemic relief policies temporarily lifted the load of poverty, but ended too soon, resulting in higher rates of economic, food and housing insecurity. In New Jersey:
- In 2021, 1,721,000 children in 1,066,000 households received the expanded Child Tax Credit and 354,000 low-wage workers without children received the expanded Earned Income Tax Credit. The expansions contributed to a dramatic decline in poverty, but ended in 2021.
- In 2022, 857,300 people relied on expanded SNAP (food stamps) benefits to feed themselves and their families. However, in 2023, SNAP benefits were reduced by $90-$250 / month, cutting them down to $6 / day. At least 388,000 people will be impacted by these cuts.
- At the beginning of 2023, more than one year after eviction protections were ended, 430,503 households reported being behind on their rent or housing payments.

Health Care and the Pandemic: Across the country, approximately 1,000 people are still dying from Covid every week and millions of people lack access to health care. In New Jersey:
- During the most intense period of the pandemic, 650,700 people were uninsured.
- With the ending of the continuous eligibility for Medicaid, 390,200 people are estimated to lose access to health care.
- Between 2019 and 2020, New Jersey experienced a 2.6% decline in average income household spends on water.
- Between 2019 and 2020, New Jersey experienced a 2.6% decline in average income household spends on energy.

Climate Crisis and Ecological Devastation: Extreme heat, storms and drought are becoming more common, with poor and low-income communities at greatest risk. In New Jersey:
- Over the past century, the state warmed 1.9 degrees Celsius, which is 0.8 degrees greater than the global average. As this trend continues, food production, spread of diseases, and health will all be adversely impacted.
- Precipitation patterns have also changed, with increased risks of flooding, drought and water scarcity.
- The percentage of poor and low-income household income that goes towards energy costs is 5 times greater than what an average income household spends on energy.
- The percentage of poor and low-income household income that goes towards water costs is 3 times greater than what an average income household spends on water.

Democracy: Across the nation, a surge of attacks on voting rights and on the rights of women and LGBTQ+ people are denying basic rights to millions of people and constraining our ability to participate in democracy. Poor and low-income people can change this:
- Accessibility: The expanded Child Tax Credit was estimated to have a greater impact on the economy than military spending, and would allow more people to start small businesses and move around the country to take better jobs, strengthening our economy and workforce.
- In New Jersey, state taxpayer dollars are being siphoned towards militarism: state taxpayer dollars for deportations and border control could instead subsidize more than 318,000 public housing units. Taxpayer dollars going to nuclear weapons could provide health insurance for over 305,000 children. Taxpayer dollars going to the biggest weapons contractor, Lockheed Martin, could hire more than 16,000 elementary school teachers.
- More than $355.97 million from New Jersey taxpayers that is going to federal prisons could instead power more than 1.32 million households with solar energy.
- New Jersey has only spent $905 million of the $6.2 billion it was allocated under the American Rescue Plan, which could be used for housing, health care and other pressing needs. In the state and local governments do not allocate these resources by December 2024, the remaining funds will be lost.

Military Spending: Government spending that prioritizes war, mass incarceration, excessive policing, and anti-immigrant forces is leading to greater violence, fear and criminalization of the poor. In New Jersey:
- In 2023, taxpayers will contribute $37.78 billion to Pentagon spending, $1.07 billion to immigration enforcement and $1.29 billion to nuclear weapons.
- Over the past 30 years, $50 million in military equipment (tanks, drones, combat rifles and ammunition) has been transferred from the Pentagon to state and local law enforcement.
- Between 2001-2020, 1,553 veterans committed suicide.
- In 2021, 475 people were killed by gun violence.
- In New Jersey, state taxpayer dollars are being siphoned towards militarism: state taxpayer dollars for deportations and border control could instead subsidize more than 318,000 public housing units. Taxpayer dollars going to nuclear weapons could provide health insurance for over 305,000 children. Taxpayer dollars going to the biggest weapons contractor, Lockheed Martin, could hire more than 16,000 elementary school teachers.
- More than $355.97 million from New Jersey taxpayers that is going to federal prisons could instead power more than 1.32 million households with solar energy.
- New Jersey has only spent $905 million of the $6.2 billion it was allocated under the American Rescue Plan, which could be used for housing, health care and other pressing needs. In the state and local governments do not allocate these resources by December 2024, the remaining funds will be lost.

Moving these resources, and investing more, to fully meet all of our needs will save lives and revive our national economy.
- During the pandemic, eviction moratoria and moratoria on utility disconnections saved lives. If enacted earlier, they could have reduced Covid deaths by 40% and 15%, respectively, across the nation. Universal health care could have saved 330,000 lives.
- Enacting Medicare for All will save $450 billion in health care costs and 68,000 lives every year.
- Ending mass incarceration could raise average US life expectancy by five years.
- Providing permanent safe housing delivers lifelong benefits to children and families at a national average cost of $1.20 to the economy.
- Expanding universal health care delivers lifelong benefits to children and families at an average cost of $557 billion.
- Expanding free college scholarships for all eligible students could triple its reach and improve the lives of at least 2.38 million families nationwide.
- Every dollar invested in providing families clean water and proper sanitation yields 5 times as many returns to the US economy.
- Freedom from debt would allow more people to start small businesses and move around the country to take better jobs, strengthening our economy and workforce.