



# IN NORTH DAKOTA:

**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 North Dakota:

- Between 2018-2020, there were 226,000 poor and low-income people, accounting for 30% of the population.\*\*
- To meet their basic needs, a household with two adults and two children needs to earn over \$23/hour. However, the current minimum wage is just \$7.25/hour. At this wage, an individual must work 92 hours/week to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment.
- There are 121,714 people, or 30.3% of the workforce, earning less than \$15 / hour. This includes 105,899 adults and 39.5% of Asian and Native workers, 53.2% of Black workers, 45.9% of Hispanic workers, 28.5% of white workers, 38.5% of working women and 53% of working women of color.
- Average household debt rose by 8% in 2022 to an average of \$55,370.
- Average student loan debt held by households was \$5,690 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 North Dakota:

- In 2021, 162,000 children in 90,000 households received the expanded Child Tax Credit and 41,000 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, 47,400 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 23,782 people will be impacted by these cuts.
- At the beginning of 2023, more than one year after eviction protections were ended, 16,065 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 North Dakota:

- During the most intense period of the pandemic, 56,800 people were uninsured.
- With the ending of continuous eligibility for Medicaid, 24,200 people are estimated to lose access to health care.
- Between 2019 and 2020, North Dakota experienced a 1.9 year decline in average life expectancy.
- Approximately 326,000 workers, or 80% of the workforce in the state, do not have access to paid leave.

**Climate Crisis and Ecological Devastation:** Extreme heat, storms and drought are becoming more common, with poor and low-income communities at greatest risk. In North Dakota:

- Over the past century, the state warmed 1.4 degrees Celsius, which is 0.3 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 6 times greater than what an average income household spends on energy.

**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 direction. In North Dakota:

- There were 12 voter restrictive bills introduced between 2020 and 2023, and 16 anti-LGBTQ+ laws introduced in 2023. While no voter restrictions were enacted, 11 of the anti-LGBTQ+ laws were enacted.
- In 2023, abortion was nearly fully banned, with few exceptions up to 6 weeks.
- In North Dakota, there are 159,575 poor and low-income eligible voters, including 151,574 white voters, 568 Latino voters, 324 Asian voters, 537 Black voters and 2,309 Indigenous voters. Together, they account for 26% of the electorate.

\*\* Source: Calculated by the Center on Poverty and Social Policy at Columbia University using data from 2019-2021 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey. Data retrieved from IPUMS-CPS (ipums.org).

**Militarism:** 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 North Dakota:

- In 2023, taxpayers will contribute \$2.81 billion to Pentagon spending, \$79.97 million to immigration enforcement and \$96.39 million to nuclear weapons.
- Over the past 30 years, \$16 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, 370 veterans committed suicide.
- In 2021, 128 people were killed by gun violence.
- There are 3,135 people incarcerated in the state.
- From Oct 2002-June 2022, over 1,069 people were deported from North Dakota.

**There is an abundance of wealth and resources to meet our basic needs and ensure we all survive and thrive.**

- A proposed federal tax on the annual increase in billionaires' wealth would generate an estimated \$557 billion over 10 years. North Dakota has a top corporate tax rate of just 4.31%, meaning big companies do not pay their fair share.
- In North Dakota, state taxpayer dollars are being siphoned towards militarism: state taxpayer dollars for deportations and border control could instead subsidize more than 10,924 public housing units. Taxpayer dollars going to nuclear weapons could provide health insurance for 21,880 children. Taxpayer dollars going to the biggest weapons contractor, Lockheed Martin, could hire more than 1,575 elementary school teachers.
- More than \$26.5 million from North Dakota taxpayers that is going to federal prisons could instead power more than 62,067 households with solar energy.
- North Dakota has only spent \$308.9 million of the 1 billion it was allocated under the American Rescue Plan, which could be used for housing, health care and other pressing needs. If 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 an national average cost of \$12,800 per person per year, far less than the cost of crisis services for those suffering chronic homelessness.
- Paid Family and Medical Leave improves employment, especially among women, increases child well-being and protects against poverty when health challenges arise.
- Increasing resources for the poor stimulates the economy much more than making the rich even richer, because the poor need to spend nearly everything they earn. Every dollar going to a low-wage worker adds \$1.20 to the economy overall. Every dollar spent on food stamps generates \$1.50-\$1.80 in economic activity.
- Expanded unemployment insurance during the pandemic protected 5.1 million jobs by boosting economic activity.
- The expanded Child Tax Credit was estimated to have a greater impact on the economy than military spending, without negative impacts on employment.
- Overdue improvements to TANF 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.