

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS PRIORITIES

The Stakes for Women, People of Color, and Poor and Low-Income Families

The Congressional Progressive Caucus has released [The People's Agenda](#), a set of bold legislative priorities for the 117th Congress. This fact sheet analyzes the potential benefits of these priorities for the nation, with a particular focus on women, people of color, and the country's 140 million poor and low-income people. Caucus priorities are in boldface.

Put Money in People's Pockets

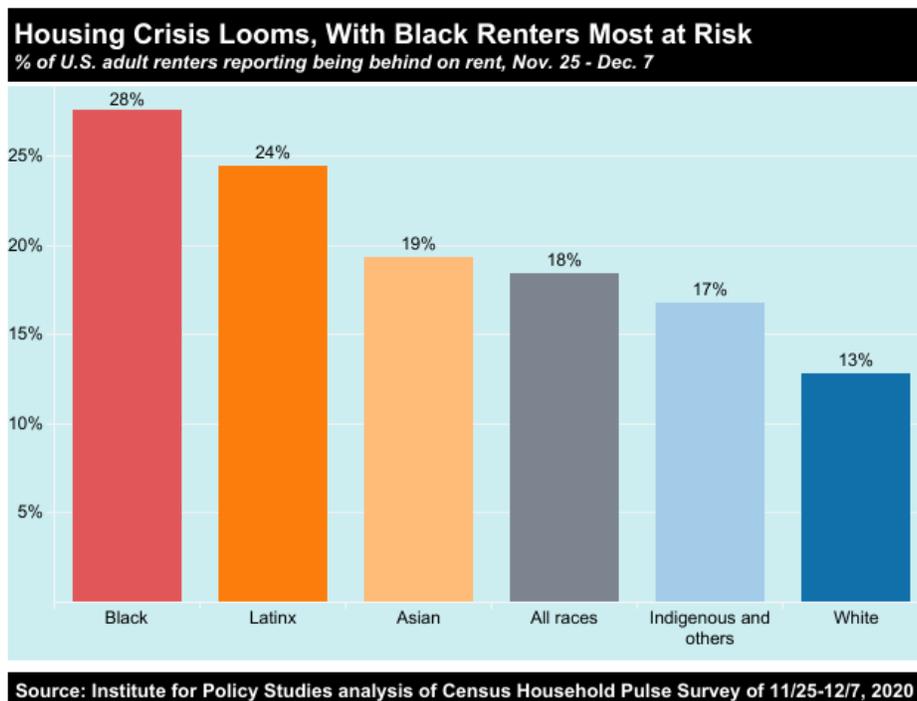
Provide \$2,000 monthly stimulus checks and continue expanded unemployment benefits:

These actions would help stimulate the economy and provide a measure of security for struggling families. The official unemployed numbered [10.7 million](#) in November 2020 — nearly [five million](#) more than in February 2020. The vast majority of jobless Americans are low-income. In fact, the employment rate for workers earning more than \$60,000 a year had returned to pre-pandemic levels by November, while the rate for those earning less than \$27,000 was [still down 20%](#). And while white Americans make up the largest number of those without jobs, the unemployment rates are [significantly higher](#) among all other racial groups.

The official unemployment rate does not include millions of Americans who've left the workforce. Women, in part because they tend to bear more responsibility for pandemic-related challenges to family health, school closures, and other disruptions, have dropped out of the labor force [at higher rates than men](#). Between February and November 2020, the drop was particularly steep for Latinx (referred to as "Hispanic" in official data sources) women, whose participation rate fell by 3.8%, and for Black women, whose rate dropped by 3.2%, compared to a 2.0% rate for men.

Covid financial support should include undocumented immigrants and the [15.4 million](#) people in mixed-status families who were excluded from CARES Act benefits.

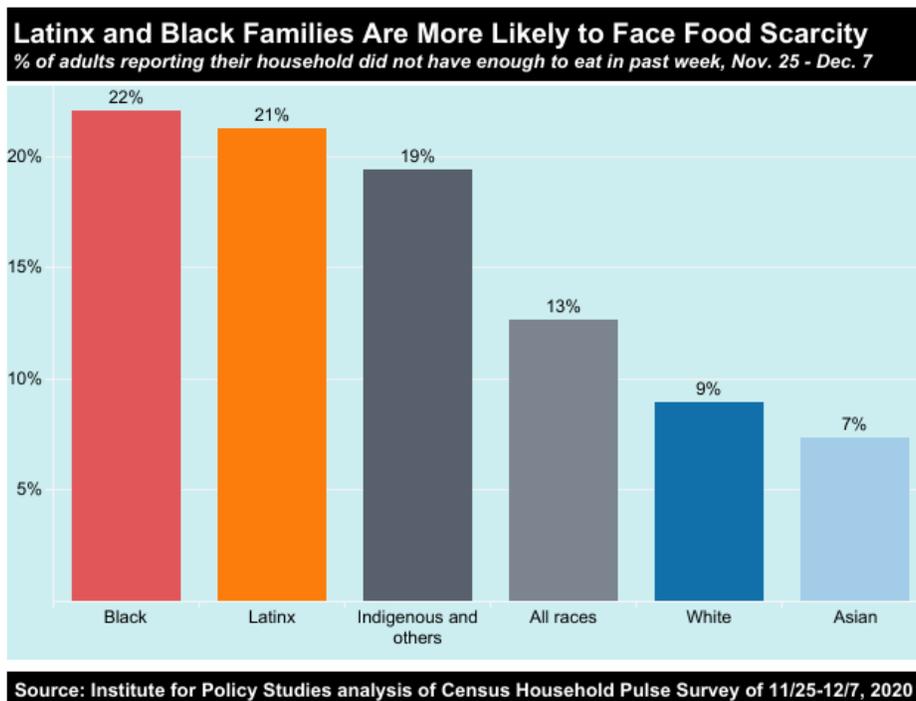
Provide rent and mortgage assistance: While sales of luxury homes have actually [increased](#) during the pandemic, a [Census survey](#) conducted November 25 to December 7, 2020 reflects widespread



risk of homelessness. Among U.S. adults who are renters, 18.3% reported that their household was behind in their rent, while 6.7% of homeowners said they had not been able to make their full mortgage payments. Black and Latinx renters have faced the most difficult challenges, with 28% of Black and 24% of Latinx households behind in payments.

Raise the minimum wage to at least \$15: This would give a raise to an estimated 33 million workers, with workers of color and women benefiting disproportionately, according to the [Economic Policy Institute](#). Of those expected to receive a pay increase, 58.3% (19.5 million) are women. In terms of race and ethnicity, 24.1% (8.0 million) are Latinx, 17.1% (5.7 million) are Black, and 6.9% (2.3 million) are Asian.

Cancel up to \$50,000 in student debt and freeze payments and cancel medical debt: This would erase all debt for more than [three-quarters](#) of student loan borrowers and significantly narrow racial and gender wealth divides. A [National Center for Education Statistics](#) study reveals that Black Bachelor’s degree and Associate’s degree graduates face 13% and 26% more student debt, respectively, than their white peers. The challenge of paying off student debt is also worsened for Black graduates due to their lower average incomes. Black Bachelor’s degree and Associate’s degree holders earn [27% and 14%](#) lower incomes, respectively, than whites with the same degree. Women hold nearly [two-thirds](#) of student loan debt and have a more difficult time paying it back because of the gender wage gap. In 2020, fully [half of all Americans](#) are concerned that they could face health-related bankruptcy. Some 15% of all U.S. adults and 20% of non-white adults currently have long-term medical debt.



Fully fund and provide universal access to social safety net programs: Strengthening critical programs, such as SNAP, Supplemental Security Income, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, as well as extending eligibility to undocumented immigrants would help families meet basic needs while acting as an economic stimulus for the country as a whole. During the pandemic, SNAP and other social safety net programs have fallen short of these needs. A [Census survey](#) conducted November 25-December 7 indicates that in the richest country in the world, 13% of all households had insufficient food either sometimes or often

in the preceding week. By racial group, 22% of Black, 21% of Latinx, 9% of white, 7% of Asian, and 19% of Indigenous, multiracial, or Pacific Islander families suffered from food scarcity.

The [average SNAP benefit](#) per person in 2020 was about \$125 per month, which is about \$1.39 per person per meal. Based on pre-pandemic data, about 76% of [SNAP benefits](#) go towards households with children, 11.9% to households with disabled persons, and 10% to households with senior citizens. According to demographic data, 39.8% of SNAP participants are white, 25.5% are Black, 10.9% are Latinx, 2.4% are Asian, and 1% are Native American.

In fact, there are approximately [140 million people](#) who are poor or one emergency from being poor and who would benefit from expanded social welfare programs. Among the 140 million are 74 million women (45% of all women), 38 million children (52% of all children) 66 million white people (33% of whites), 38 million Latinx people (64% of Latinx), 24 million Black people (60% of Black people), 8 million Asian people (40% of Asian people) and 2 million Native people (59% of Native people).

Protect Essential Workers and Expand the Workforce

Provide hazard pay, strong workplace health and safety protections, paid leave and necessary equipment to frontline workers, including family physicians and others excluded, and provide a roadmap to citizenship for all essential workers: The Economic Policy Institute [has documented](#) that Black and Latinx people make up disproportionate numbers of the jobs deemed “essential,” increasing their exposure to virus risks. Of the more than 55 million food, emergency services, transportation, and other essential workers, 55% are white, 15% are Black, 21% are Latinx, and 6% are Asian and Pacific Islander. Women make up a large majority of many frontline essential jobs. According to the [Economic Policy Institute](#), women make up 73% of government and community-based services workers and 76% of health care workers. An [estimated 5 million](#) undocumented immigrants are also on the frontlines, working in the food, construction, and other industries to keep the economy functioning.

Create childcare and 600,000 long-term care jobs to care for seniors, children, and others: Approximately [800,000](#) low-income disabled and aged Americans are on waiting lists for home and community care under Medicaid to get the help they need and relieve the strain on unpaid family caregivers. If the new jobs pay good wages and benefits, this would also be a boon to workers in this low-wage industry. The median hourly wage for the country’s [3.4 million](#) home health aides and personal care aides was [\\$12.15](#) in 2019. More than [88%](#) of home health aides working for agencies are female, with about 37.0% white, 30.3% Black, 22.4% Latinx, and 8.6% Asian and Pacific Islander. Even before demand shot up under the pandemic, childcare was [unaffordable](#) for many American families — despite extremely low pay for workers in this sector. In 2019, more than 93% of the more than 1 million U.S. childcare workers were women and their median wage was [\\$11.65](#).

Defeat the Virus and Prepare for Universal Vaccination

- **Ensure equitable, culturally competent distribution of free vaccines, treatment and testing for everyone, regardless of race, geographic, immigration, economic, gender or other status**
- **Ensure robust protections for people in congregate settings, such as schools, nursing homes, churches, and prisons, jails, and detention facilities**

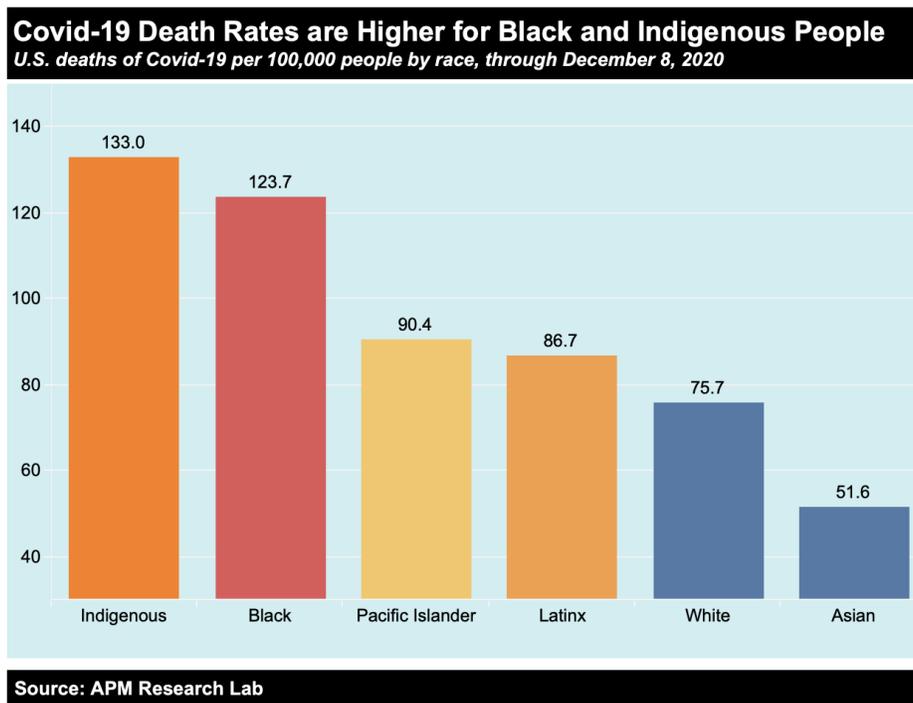
- **Collect accurate disaggregated data by race, socioeconomic status, occupation and geography to inform all efforts and reach all communities**
- **Create 100,000 new public health jobs to ensure effective contact tracing and response**
- **Support domestic manufacturing through the Defense Production Act to replenish supplies**
- **Fund global efforts for universal vaccine access**

Without these bold actions, the Covid death toll could rise into the millions in the United States and tens of millions world-wide. As of the middle of December, more than 16 million Americans have been infected with Covid-19 and 300,000 have died from the disease, while the global death count exceeds 1.6 million.

According to [APM Research Lab](#) as of December 8, 151,354 white people, 2,834 Indigenous people, 49,994 Black people, 51,182 Latinx people, 9,412 Asian people, and 435 Pacific Islanders have died from Covid-19. In addition to race, [income](#) is a major factor in determining Covid-19 mortality rates, with [lower-income](#) Americans being particularly vulnerable to the pandemic. However, information related to income is less widely available than racial and ethnic information, indicating a weak spot in our analysis and understanding of socio-economic vulnerabilities to the virus.

People of color are particularly at risk. As of December 5, [CDC data](#) shows that hospitalization rates for Indigenous, Black, and Hispanic and Latinx people are significantly higher than for whites and Asians, regardless of their age. Per 100,000 people, around 505 Indigenous people, 423 Black people, and 415 Latinx people have had Covid-19 symptoms serious enough to require hospitalization, compared to 153 Asian people and 174 whites.

According to [APM Research Lab](#), Black Americans also have Covid-19 mortality rates that are more than twice as high as other races, and Indigenous people also have significantly higher mortality rates. As of December 8, the death rate per 100,000 people was 124 among Black, 133 among Indigenous, 87 among Latinx, 90 among Pacific Islander, 76 among white, and 52 among Asian Americans.



People in settings where they gather in close proximity are also at high risk. As of the last week in November, Covid-19 had claimed the lives of more than [100,000](#) long-term care facility residents and staff. A December 2020 study found that ICE immigrant detention centers were responsible for over [245,000](#) Covid-19 cases in those facilities and surrounding counties between May and August. And at least [200,000](#) prison inmates have been infected with Covid-19, while at least 1,450 inmates and correctional officers have died from the virus.

As our healthcare workforce strains under the pandemic's weight, it is critical to invest in strengthening their ranks, particularly to ensure linguistic and other diversity to meet community needs. To achieve a humane and effective global pandemic recovery, the United States should also join the World Health Organization's COVAX Facility, support the World Trade Organization's waiver of intellectual property rights restrictions that would hinder vaccine distribution, and join and heed the [global call](#) for an equitably distributed vaccine program. Without enormous efforts to ensure equity, [9 out of 10 people](#) in 70 low-income countries are unlikely to be vaccinated against Covid-19 next year.

Fund State, Local, and Tribal Governments to Provide Critical Services, Including Public Health, Education, Transportation, Unemployment, Affordable Housing and Safety Net

The National League of Cities [estimates that](#) through 2022, municipalities will face a combined budget shortfall of \$360 billion. The National Association of Counties [expects that](#) the pandemic will cost counties \$202 billion through FY 2021 in additional expenses, lost revenue, and lower contributions from state governments. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities [forecasts similarly](#) large shortfalls to state budgets over the next few years. This will cripple the ability of sub-federal governments to cover the costs of public education, health, and social service programs. As [CBPP](#) points out, states have already begun budget-slashing. For example, Georgia's state budget will shrink by 10% for 2021, including a nearly \$1 billion cut for K-12 public schools. Maryland enacted \$413 million in emergency spending cuts, including large cuts to colleges and universities. Florida has already cut money for community colleges and services related to behavioral health, including opioid and other substance use treatment services, crisis intervention services, and services for the homeless.

Provide Direct Assistance to Small- and Medium-Sized Businesses, With a Focus on Small and Minority-Owned Businesses, and a Requirement to Keep Workers on Payroll and in Benefits

The number of functioning small businesses in the United States was [down 29%](#) in December, compared to January 2020. This has been a particularly hard blow to female, Black, and Latinx entrepreneurs who already faced high hurdles to business ownership. The most recent [Census Bureau survey](#) of employer-based businesses (firms with at least one paid employee) shows that in 2017 Blacks owned just 2.2% (124,004), Latinx owned 6.1% (351,237), and women owned 19% (1.1 million). About three-quarters of all small businesses applied for financial support through the Paycheck Protection Program, but only [38.1%](#) had received assistance as of May 27. Because banks gave priority to larger firms, those owned by people of color faced higher hurdles to obtaining loans. Businesses owned by undocumented immigrants were ineligible. In the first two months of the pandemic, Asian-owned businesses experienced a particularly severe rate of closures, an estimated [28%](#) compared to 17% for white-owned businesses, with xenophobia stoked by President Trump likely a contributing factor.

Put People Back to Work, Give Workers More Power, and Transform to a Clean Renewable Energy Economy

Expand collective bargaining, the right to unionize and workplace democracy in all policies:

The decline of U.S. labor unions has been a major factor in the widening income divide. As the share of the workforce represented by a union [has declined to](#) less than 11% since their peak at 33% in the 1940s and 1950s, those at the top of the income scale [have increased their](#) power to rig economic rules in their favor, further increasing income inequality. Despite this decline, union jobs still pay nearly [20% more on average](#) than non-union jobs. Among Latinx unionized workers, median weekly earnings were \$954, compared to \$686 for non-unionized Latinx workers. Among Black unionized workers, median weekly earnings in 2019 were \$905, compared to \$711 for non-unionized Black workers.

- **Invest in a bold green infrastructure package that prioritizes frontline communities, advances clean renewable energy and public transit, fixes roads and bridges, provides job training and re-training and rebuilds communities with new and better schools, water and sanitation systems, and universal broadband**
- **Dramatically curtail air, water, land, and climate pollution, and promote a just worker transition**
- **Create resilience jobs to help communities prepare for and respond to climate-related disasters**

Robust public investment in [renewable energy generation capacity](#) and [energy efficiency retrofits](#) could help the country achieve a full employment economy while reducing energy insecurity, particularly for low-income and people of color communities. The [31% of U.S. households](#) who are energy insecure are disproportionately Indigenous, Black, people of color, and/or low-wealth.

A shift in federal surface transportation priorities from highways to [public transit](#) would benefit communities broadly, but [most particularly](#) people of color and low-wealth households. Only 12.5% of white households do not own any vehicles, compared to 22.4% of Latinx households and almost 33% of Black households. While less than 8% of households in the highest income quintile don't own vehicles, this number rises to almost 38% for the lowest income quintile. A priority of any investment in road repair should prioritize smarter and safer design for all users, including pedestrians.

Upgrading water supply systems could create [nearly a million jobs](#) while addressing the lack of access to affordable clean water and sanitation, which disproportionately affects low-wealth, Indigenous, Black, and people of color households. One [study](#) of the 20 counties with the lowest rates of access to basic household plumbing found that all were low-income rural counties, and 13 had a majority Native American or Alaska Native population. Another [study](#) showed that the share of U.S. households with unaffordable water bills could rise to almost 36% by 2022.

Inaction on climate change could cost the U.S. up to [15.7% of its GDP](#) a year, with devastating human impacts. For example, Black Americans are [52% more likely](#) to be exposed to extreme heat waves than their white counterparts, and fine particulate matter pollution, a consequence of fossil fuel combustion, causes almost [200,000 U.S. deaths a year](#), with the mortality rates higher for Black and lower-income individuals. These groups are also disproportionately represented among the [22% of the U.S. population](#) that lives within three miles of highly contaminated Superfund sites.

Restoring degraded forests, wetlands, and other ecosystems would create [significant jobs](#) while helping communities adapt to climate change. Increased investment in regenerative farming practices could also help address the climate change challenge while making farming more profitable on a sustainable basis. Agriculture and forestry together account for an estimated [10.5 percent](#) of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.

Universal broadband would ensure internet access for every student and address the digital divide that undermines opportunities for as many as [42 million](#) Americans, particularly in rural areas. One option would be to provide affordable broadband as a public service through the Postal Service, as the [UK](#), [France](#), and other nations do now.

- **Build a strong families infrastructure package by investing in the caregiving economy, public education, paid leave, and universal childcare and providing equal pay, living wages, and benefits to childcare, public education, and domestic workers:** As noted above, child care and home care are unaffordable for many families, despite very low wages for the predominantly women workers in this sector.
- **Renegotiate and negotiate fair trade policies that protect domestic manufacturing and good jobs, and strengthen worker power and environmental protections everywhere:** Corporate-driven trade agreements have given large corporations even more power to pit workers against each other in a race to the bottom in global wages and working conditions. These policies have been a key factor in the loss of [nearly 5 million](#) good U.S. manufacturing jobs since 1997. And while white workers have lost the most jobs, people of color have been heavily affected. Black workers are [highly represented](#) in industries that have suffered numerous trade shocks, such as autos and auto parts, tires, and pulp and paper mills. Across all industries and regions, Black women are 27% more likely and Black men are 34% more likely to have been displaced through a plant closing or other permanent layoff than their white counterparts. Latinx workers are disproportionately represented in light manufacturing, including the apparel and textile sector, which was doubly hit by NAFTA and China's accession to the WTO.

Ensure Health Care for Everyone by Taking Important Steps to Expand Healthcare and Make Equitable Investments into Public Health Infrastructure As We Work Towards Medicare for All

- **Automatically enroll anyone who loses their job into Medicare**
- **Expand traditional Medicare to lower the eligibility age to 50 and cover all children up to 25**
- **Lower prescription drug prices through direct negotiating drugs across all payers**
- **Increase funding for all public health care systems, including community health centers, behavioral health providers, Indian Health Service and Urban Indian Health Care Centers, and rural and veterans' hospitals**
- **Protect access to all health and reproductive services for women and the trans community, and address the maternal mortality crisis and its disproportionate impact on communities of color**
- **Ensure that mental health and substance use treatment is provided at no out of pocket cost**

These changes would significantly benefit the tens of millions of Americans without health insurance. As of 2019, this number stood at [29 million](#) and it has no doubt grown due to the pandemic and economic recession. The Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that [2-3 million people](#) lost employer-based insurance between March and September. The number would be far higher if not for the fact that so many of the low-wage workers who've been hard hit by pandemic job losses never had coverage through their job in the first place. People of color are also disproportionately likely to be uninsured. According to [Census Bureau data](#), 19.1% of Indigenous people (530,578), 18.7% of Latinx people (11.1 million), 10.1% of Black people (4.1 million), 8.3% of white people (19.4 million), and 6.6% of Asian people (1.2 million) are uninsured.

Defend and Expand Voting Rights, Strengthen Democracy and End Corruption to Return the Vote and Voice Back to the People

Protect the right to vote by passing a broad and comprehensive voting rights bill that eliminates barriers to voting, in particular for Black, Indigenous, and communities of color, disabled people, currently and formerly incarcerated people, and others:

[At least 25 states](#) have passed voter suppression laws since 2010. These laws, which disproportionately target [Black, Brown, Native](#) and poor people, include racist gerrymandering, shortening early voting hours and having restricted voting days, eliminating same day registration, and voter ID requirements. Over [6 million people](#) have been disenfranchised because of a felony conviction, including 1 in 13 Black adults. According to a Poor People's Campaign [study](#), approximately 63 million poor and low-income people are eligible to vote, but 34 million of them did not vote in 2016. In addition to voter suppression tactics, transportation, accessibility, and not seeing their interests on the political agenda were factors in keeping them out of the political process.

Provide statehood to more than 700,000 people living in the District of Columbia: This would end the disenfranchisement of a city with a [population](#) that is larger than two U.S. states (Vermont and Wyoming) and is majority people of color.

End corruption and the dominance of big money and corporate interests by eliminating secret corporate spending in elections, implementing a public campaign finance system, strengthening Congress, and toughening lobbying and ethics laws for members of Congress and groups: According to [Demos](#), the high-donor political class is overwhelmingly white. In the 2014 election cycle, for example, 94% of those giving more than \$5,000 were white. This big money system is a barrier to entry for candidates of color and leads to the rigging of public policy to serve the interests of a small elite.

Dismantle Racism, White Supremacy and Inequality in All Institutions to Create Justice, Ensure Equality and Opportunity For All and End the Racial Wealth Gap

- **Establish a commission on truth, racial healing, and transformation, and a commission to study and develop reparations**
- **Ensure non-discrimination protections for BIPOC and LGBTQ people across the board**
- **Pass a comprehensive policing reform bill to ensure that policing reflects community values and upholds civil rights, demilitarize the police and invest more resources in communities**
- **Reduce criminalization and incarceration through sentencing reform, legalizing cannabis, expunging records and providing restorative justice**
- **Create a just immigration system by passing a roadmap to freedom that ensures fairness, citizenship, family unity, ends the criminalization of immigrants for profit, creates humane alternatives to detention and deportation, and upholds protections for people seeking safety**
- **Fully meet and fund all trust obligations to Tribal Nations and communities**
- **Prevent gun violence, including by implementing universal background checks and banning semi-automatic weapons**

The criminalization of poverty and the failed "War on Drugs" have been key drivers of mass incarceration and racial injustice. By the Department of Justice's own admission, [95%](#) of the growth in the incarcerated population since 2000 is the result of an increase in the number of defendants unable

to make bail. As [Drug Policy Alliance data](#) from 2018 shows, Black people are 13% of the U.S. population, but they are the target of 29% of all drug arrests and 40% of all those incarcerated in state or federal prisons for drug violations. Latinx people make up 18% of the population, but 38% of people in federal prison for drug violations. [ACLU research shows](#) that Black people are 3.6 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana than white people.

A new immigration agenda would have immeasurable benefits for the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants and their families and for the health of the entire nation. President Trump's anti-immigrant agenda has caused devastating harm. His signature project, the border wall, has been allocated [\\$15 billion](#) — enough to cover the cost, for example, of [418 million](#) Covid-19 tests. These immigration reforms are particularly critical at a time when millions of undocumented immigrants are providing essential services on the frontlines of the pandemic. Public Citizen [has documented](#) the very high shares of the uninsured in industries with large numbers of undocumented workers, including 50% of agricultural workers, 15.5% of meatpacking workers, 24% of construction workers, 26% of home care workers, and 27% of cooks and 22% of servers in restaurants/food industry.

Nearly [every American](#) will know a gun violence victim in their lifetime, but there are disproportionate impacts by race. [CDC data shows](#) that, from 2014 to 2018, the rate of gun deaths per 100,000 people for Blacks was 19.98, which is almost twice the rate among whites. In total, 135,965 white people and 47,138 Black people were killed by gun violence during this period. [Academic research](#) also shows that higher levels of income inequality in counties are associated with higher gun homicide rates.

End Endless Wars and Invest in Diplomacy and Peace to Stop Massively Increasing Pentagon Budgets That Fuel Wars and Sap Communities of Vital Investments in Education, Housing, and More

- Repeal old authorizations for use of military force, require Congressional approval for all wars and acts of war, and end the U.S. wars in Yemen and Afghanistan including air and drone wars
- Reduce Pentagon spending to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse while maintaining support for personnel and families
- Invest in diplomacy, development, peace building, and education through grassroots-fueled aid
- End executive powers to enact unilateral sanctions and end military aid to repressive regimes

These policies would have immeasurable benefits in terms of increasing real security here and abroad and in freeing up resources for social and environmental good. According to the National Priorities Project of the [Institute for Policy Studies](#), a 10% cut to the Pentagon (\$74 billion) could be reinvested in:

Ending Homelessness: House every one of the more than [half a million](#) homeless people in this country with money to spare.

Infrastructure Jobs: Create more than [one million good jobs](#) in cities like Flint, Michigan, building desperately needed new infrastructure.

Covid testing: Conduct [2 billion](#) Covid tests, or enough to offer six free Covid tests to every person in the United States.

Racial Equity in Schools: Close the [\\$23 billion funding gap](#) between majority-white and majority non-white school districts.

Free College: Fund free college educations for more than [2 million](#) low income students, or the poorest [10%](#) of current college students.

Clean Energy: Fund enough [renewable energy](#) to power almost [every household](#) in the US.

Green Jobs: Create [one million](#) well-paying clean energy jobs, enough to transition nearly every worker in the [traditional coal, oil, and gas sectors](#)

Teachers: Hire [900,000](#) new public elementary school teachers, adding about [nine new teachers](#) to every public elementary school in the country.

Face Masks: Purchase enough [N95 face masks](#) for all of the [55 million](#) essential workers to use one a day for more than a year.

The economic fallout from the pandemic is expected to hit developing countries hardest. Experts predict the number of people facing starvation could roughly double to [265 million](#), while as many as [half a billion](#) more could be forced into poverty. [Special Drawing Rights](#), a form of money created by the International Monetary Fund, would be an effective tool for stimulating the global economy and avoiding a humanitarian disaster without cost to U.S. taxpayers.

While a shift away from militarism is critical, we should not assume that economic sanctions are a kinder, gentler approach. The Center for Economic and Policy Research has documented that sanctions supported by the U.S. government, which affect nearly [200 million people](#), have been largely ineffective and led to the loss of tens of thousands of lives.

End Corporate Greed and Corporate Monopolies to End Poverty and Stop Poor and Working People from Getting Poorer While Huge Corporations and the Wealthiest Get Wealthier

Strengthen and expand antitrust laws to end monopolistic practices, protect consumers' and workers' interests, and guarantee fair markets to ensure equal footing for small businesses: Corporate concentration is a significant factor behind many pressing problems, including the loss of small businesses and decent jobs, forcing many people to rely on insecure “gig” work. Monopoly power also [fuels racial injustice](#), for example, when big banks deprive Black, Latinx, and Asian business owners of capital and telecom giants drive a digital divide that leaves many households of color behind.

Restructure our tax system to reward labor, provide tax credits for low-income families, and make the wealthy, corporations, and Wall Street pay their fair share: The collective wealth of America's 651 billionaires jumped by over \$1 trillion between the beginning of the pandemic and December 7, 2020, according to Institute for Policy Studies and Americans for Tax Fairness [research](#). The ultra-wealthy have benefited from the surging stock market and the discounted tax rates on investment earnings, compared to income from labor. Long before the pandemic, the nation's wealth gap was staggering, particularly along racial lines. According to the [Institute for Policy Studies](#), between 1983 and 2016, the median Black family saw their wealth drop by more than half after adjusting for inflation, compared to a 33% increase for the median white household. The Forbes 400 richest Americans own more wealth than all Black households plus a quarter of Latinx households.

Implement standards for large corporations receiving aid, subsidies and government contracts, including maintaining good U.S. jobs with benefits, narrow gaps between CEO and worker pay, and ensuring gender and racial diversity in particular in top management: Congress and the administration could do much more to use the power of the public purse to reduce economic, gender, and racial inequality within large corporations. Thus far, Covid-related financial support for businesses has come with only weak strings (and none at all on Federal Reserve support). The federal government also gives corporations [hundreds of billions](#) of dollars per year in contracts and subsidies that could be used to incentivize high-road business models.

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