

PROGRESSIVE THINKING

A SYNTHESIS OF AMERICAN PROGRESSIVE VALUES, BELIEFS AND POSITIONS

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AL YATES • ANNE BARTLEY



AMERICAN VALUES PROJECT

*PROGRESSIVE THINKING,
A Synthesis of American Progressive Values, Beliefs and Positions*

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“It’s amazing what you can accomplish if you don’t care who gets the credit.”

—Harry Truman

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Al Yates, Colorado Democracy Alliance, Chair of AVP and Anne Bartley, Committee on States, Vice Chair of AVP

PREFACE: ABOUT THE AMERICAN VALUES PROJECT

Progressives tend to be open-minded and pluralistic in their beliefs and views about politics. Although admirable and reflective of our independent spirit and character, these same traits often undermine our ability to advance a common understanding about our government, our society and our economy. This open-mindedness also prevents us from successfully countering the dominant anti-government narrative that controls contemporary political discourse and inhibits our ability to advance a progressive vision of a society characterized by rising living standards and opportunities for all; safe, clean and healthy communities; and economic growth and widely shared prosperity.

The American Values Project (AVP) seeks to address this concern by providing a comprehensive and practical synthesis of the current and best understanding of progressivism, encompassing its history, traditions, worldview, values and positions on major issues. *Progressive Thinking* is designed to serve as a foundation for greater coherence in communications and unity in the expression of progressive ideals and aspirations. This document—and our use of the terms “progressive thinking” and “synthesis”—are informed by our communications with more than 300 progressives and extensive correspondence and conversations with many of our nation’s leading progressive thinkers. (See *Acknowledgements*.)

Progressive Thinking outlines what we believe as progressives and how we view the world. It is designed to help our nation’s diverse progressive community better understand and articulate a common philosophical and values framework to the wider public. We also believe a majority of Americans will find themselves and their views represented in these pages because progressive thought is deeply rooted in the values and philosophies on which our country was founded and upon which we have built nearly two and a half centuries of American achievement.

Our approach is simple to summarize and is built upon the ideas of generations of progressives from Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin Roosevelt to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Barack Obama: *Everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does his or her fair share, and everyone plays by the same rules.* As progressives, we believe everyone deserves a fair shot at a decent, fulfilling and economically secure life. We believe everyone should do his or her fair share to build this life through education, personal responsibility, hard work and active participation in public life.

And we believe everyone should play by the same set of rules, with no special privileges for the well-connected or wealthy.

This handbook is grounded in our nation's history. It advances our beliefs in liberty, equality and the common good as outlined by the Founders. It defends our commitment to a smart and active government that allows Americans to work together to solve problems we cannot address on our own. It celebrates individual opportunity and achievement as essential to both the private and public good. It reinforces our belief that responsible and successful private enterprise and public investments together create the foundations for economic growth. It celebrates family and community, in all their forms, as foundational building blocks for democracy. These are tried-and-true American priorities and they are core to a strong and prosperous society that works for everyone.

Progressive Thinking is designed to be read either in whole or in part, depending on what is most useful to individual readers. It includes a concise summary of the progressive story and sections on core progressive values and beliefs about government, the economy and national security. It then applies this framework to some of the most pressing and complex issues of our age, as a guide to how progressive thought informs solutions to today's major challenges. Throughout these pages, we've included references to important speeches and documents that help define a progressive worldview, as well as lists and facts in the various appendices to help make the case. In writing this document, we have been reminded again of the close alignment of progressive history and current thinking with our most important founding documents: the U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

This publication is not intended as a consensus statement of progressivism nor is it written as a collection of suggested talking points, campaign slogans or political messages. Rather, we hope this synthesis of progressive ideas will become the basis for ongoing discussions among progressives and others across the country. The development and expression of a clear worldview takes time. It requires continual reflection, debate and practice. We want this piece and the trainings that follow to be useful resources for readers both now and over the long term—and so plan to update the handbook regularly based on the comments and suggestions of our audiences and training participants.

Finally, as emphasized throughout *Progressive Thinking*, progressivism is a collection of philosophical beliefs and practical approaches that combine to achieve a better tomorrow through education and rational

thinking. Progressivism, as a philosophy, is nonpartisan and can boast of significant historical contributions to our nation’s progress and culture from adherents in both of our major political parties.

We sincerely hope *Progressive Thinking* and its central, common-sense theme—“everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does his or her fair share, and everyone plays by the same rules”—will help focus the views and, indeed, the hopes of a growing majority of Americans committed to progressive principles and policies.

American Values Project Steering Committee:

Al Yates, Chair, Colorado Democracy Alliance

Anne Bartley, Vice-Chair, Committee on States

Cuong P. Hoang, Mott Philanthropic

Van Jones, Rebuild the Dream

Maria Teresa Kumar, Voto Latino

Tara McGuinness, Center for American Progress

Rob McKay, Democracy Alliance and the McKay Foundation

Carl Pope, Sierra Club

Tim Sweeney, Gill Foundation

Valerie Tarico, Washington Progress Alliance

Jon Youngdahl, Service Employees International Union

Part I: The Progressive Story in Action



OUR STORY

Successful political stories usually have three things in common:

- They begin with a **Quest**. The heroes—whether candidates, organizations or ordinary citizens—articulate a compelling vision that speaks to the concerns and desires of a community.
- Second, comes the **Challenge**. The heroes contrast their vision with the problem or problems they hope to solve—and with the alternative vision proposed by their adversaries on the opposing side.
- Then, there’s the **Solution**. Our heroes offer a path forward—often in the form of new leadership or legislation or even a new order of things—that overcomes the visible threats and leads the community toward a desired outcome embodied by the vision.

Successful stories also employ easy-to-comprehend heroes (those leading the fight on our side) and adversaries (those working against the society we want to create)—and present people with a set of tools to carry out their quest.

In keeping with this formula, progressives have employed different stories at different times in history to advance their causes, whether fighting for the 40-hour work week or a woman’s right to vote. The section that follows uses this approach to begin to map a compelling story for progressivism in America today. At the end of this section are three speeches that demonstrate how such stories have actually been translated to real-world challenges and solutions—and a list of what progressive heroes have achieved for our country. These are examples of the progressive story in action.

THE QUEST: A MORE PERFECT UNION

From our nation's founding through the great advances of the Progressive, New Deal and Civil Rights eras, progressives have followed a simple American creed: **"Everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does his or her fair share, and everyone plays by the same rules."** This creed reflects our political and moral commitment to freedom with opportunity for all, responsibility from all and cooperation among all. It is grounded in our constitutional beliefs that government exists to secure and protect our rights; to protect us from harm; to ensure opportunity; and to provide the foundation for fair markets and the public good.

To fulfill the American creed today, progressives are fighting to create a growing economy with vibrant businesses and widely shared prosperity. We want an economy that works for everyone, not just the few. We are fighting for good jobs with higher wages, a stronger middle class, equality for all Americans, workers' rights and a cleaner, more sustainable economy. We are fighting for more secure families and communities where all children are raised in a safe and healthy environment with decent schools and a chance to pursue their dreams. We are fighting for greater personal freedoms and the rights of individuals to live in keeping with their own beliefs, goals and desires. We are fighting for greater international cooperation and global solutions to common problems such as poverty, health, climate change and terrorism. We are fighting for a government that is on the side of American families and workers.



THE CHALLENGE: ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL, POLITICAL AND CIVIC

The American creed seems so unassailable: “Everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does his or her fair share, and everyone plays by the same rules.” But America today is facing serious political and moral threats to this basic creed and our way of life.

We have an economic challenge. Our economy is not working as it should. The good jobs and wages necessary for strong families are disappearing. The middle class is in danger. The ranks of the poor are growing. These problems cross racial, ethnic, gender and class lines and affect people in all parts of the country. America needs to make and export more goods, deploying the skills of our country’s own well-educated and well-trained workers. We need modern infrastructure and a high-quality, accessible education system to prepare this workforce and fuel our growth. We need to stop the destructive financial speculation that wrecked our economy and foreclosed on the American Dream. We need to end the attacks on the rights of American workers to bargain collectively. We need to support and reward businesses that build and invest in America, rather than subsidizing those that weaken it. We need everyone in America to have access to good jobs that reward hard work and achievement.

We have an environmental challenge. Our use of fossil fuels is unsustainable. Energy is critical to our economic growth and well-being. We must and can develop cleaner, more renewable forms of energy that don’t pollute our air and contribute to global warming. We need to rebuild our cities and communities to encourage healthier living and conserve energy, and we need lower-impact forms of transportation. We need to protect our lands and waterways and preserve America’s natural resources for future generations.

We have a political challenge. Our representative democracy depends on every citizen having an equal voice in the priorities and policies of our government. But today, our political system is increasingly rigged in favor of large, powerful corporations and the very wealthy. Too many of our nation’s business and political elites look out for themselves at the expense of the country as a whole. Our tax system is patently unfair. Special interests have gutted public-interest regulations. We need to replace this corrosive self-interest and neglect of the public good with a stronger spirit of mutual responsibility to one another and to our country. We need a government that works for all of us and protects the interests of workers and families.

We have a civic engagement challenge. The serious decline in public trust in government as an instrument for the common good—a decline fueled by direct failures of government, active attacks from conservatives and disengagement among citizens—threatens our ability to work together to achieve national goals. We must reform government to perform its essential duties more effectively and reclaim it as a necessary means of building public and private prosperity. Progressives must be active defenders of and advocates for a smart, efficient and effective government that enables individual and societal achievement. We must seek ways to reengage Americans with their government.

THE SOLUTION: FOUNDATIONS FOR A MORE PERFECT UNION

America has overcome more difficult challenges in the past. We defeated totalitarian threats to our democracy. We triumphed over the Great Depression to create the world's strongest economy and most secure middle class. We fought to expand civil rights and liberties to all people. We challenged the domination of big corporations over individuals and created an economy with greater opportunities and security for workers and families, backed up by a thoughtfully woven safety net for the most vulnerable among us—children, the elderly and the severely impoverished.

So how do we marshal our resources today to overcome our current challenges and continue to build a society in which “everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does his or her fair share and everyone plays by the same rules?” Progressives offer clear and achievable priorities. We need to:

- *Build an economy that works for everyone, not just the few.*
- *Reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and move to cleaner, more innovative ways to produce and consume energy.*
- *Ensure our political system is ‘of, by and for’ the people and not rigged in favor of big corporations and the privileged.*
- *Cooperate more with one another, in our politics and our economy, to help solve our most pressing problems, from a lack of good jobs and rising poverty to struggling schools and burgeoning environmental problems.*
- *Reform government to work more effectively and eliminate waste.*
- *Encourage citizens to participate more in political discourse and governing.*

The Heroes in Our Story

Heroes are easy to identify in the progressive story. They are the individuals and families of all kinds who embrace and model the best of American values. They are those who keep America strong through individual achievement and personal contributions while recognizing the necessity of concerted public action.



They are the soldiers and veterans who commit themselves to protecting our freedoms and national borders. They are the entrepreneurs and innovators who use their education and ingenuity to create new, clean industries and put people to work in decent jobs. They are the public servants and volunteers who improve our neighborhoods, schools and communities. They are the advocates and people of faith who stand up for social and economic justice. They are the small, local business owners who are dedicated to their communities, even while forced to compete on an unlevelled playing field with large corporate interests. And they are the responsible leaders in government and business who advance the public good while balancing economic, social and environmental concerns.

The Adversaries in Our Story

Several actors and forces are actively blocking our progressive path to a better future. They are powerful individuals, irresponsible corporations and special interest lobbyists who rig the economic and political systems in favor of themselves and those close to them. They are careless and corrupt leaders who deceive the public and misuse our government, sowing the seeds of disillusion and cynicism. They are those who promote an ideological belief system in which government is always the problem and markets always the solution, disdaining cooperation and dismissing the very idea of a “public good.”

The Tools We Can Use to Advance Our Quest for a Better Society

While progressives don't have the money and infrastructure that drive conservative politics, we have the three primary tools we need to lead our successful quest for a better society:

- We love our country and are unflinching in our belief about what makes America great: our nation's deep commitment to freedom, opportunity, responsibility and cooperation.
- We have millions of dedicated and courageous people of all stripes who learn about the issues, get engaged in their communities and volunteer their time to help others and advance progressive causes.
- Finally, we have a democracy that allows us to stand up for our beliefs, fight for what we think is right, debate with others and develop policies and solutions that advance our common interests.

Harnessed successfully and strategically, the power of people and progressive principles can overcome the political and moral threats to our basic creed.

THE PROGRESSIVE STORY IN ACTION: SELECTED SPEECHES FROM PROGRESSIVE LEADERS

The Progressive Story in Action, Theodore Roosevelt in Osawatomie, KS, 1910

Practical equality of opportunity for all citizens, when we achieve it, will have two great results. First, **every man will have a fair chance to make of himself all that in him lies; to reach the highest point to which his capacities, unassisted by special privilege of his own and unhampered by the special privilege of others, can carry him, and to get for himself and his family substantially what he has earned.** Second, equality of opportunity means that the commonwealth will get from every citizen the highest service of which he is capable. No man who carries the burden of the special privileges of another can give to the commonwealth that service to which it is fairly entitled.

I stand for the square deal. But when I say that I am for the square deal, I mean not merely that I stand for fair play under the present rules of the game, but that I stand for having those rules changed so as to work for a more substantial equality of opportunity and of reward for equally good service. One word of warning, which, I think, is hardly necessary in Kansas. When I say I want a square deal for the poor man, I do not mean that I want a square deal for the man who remains poor because he has not got the energy to work for himself. If a man who has had a chance will not make good, then he has got to quit. And you men of the Grand Army, you want justice for the brave man who fought, and punishment for the coward who shirked his work. Is that not so?

Now, this means that our government, National and State, must be freed from the sinister influence or control of special interests. Exactly as the special interests of cotton and slavery threatened our political integrity before the Civil War, so now the great special business interests too often control and corrupt the men and methods of government for their own profit. We must drive the special interests out of politics. That is one of our tasks to-day. Every special interest is entitled to justice - full, fair, and complete - and, now, mind you, if there were any attempt by mob-violence to plunder and work harm to the special interest, whatever it may be, that I most dislike, and the

wealthy man, whomsoever he may be, for whom I have the greatest contempt, I would fight for him, and you would if you were worth your salt. He should have justice. For every special interest is entitled to justice, but not one is entitled to a vote in Congress, to a voice on the bench, or to representation in any public office. The Constitution guarantees protection to property, and we must make that promise good. But it does not give the right of suffrage to any corporation.

The Progressive Story in Action, President Truman on The Fair Deal, 1949

During the last 16 years, **our people have been creating a society which offers new opportunities for every man to enjoy his share of the good things of life.**

In this society, we are conservative about the values and principles which we cherish; but we are forward-looking in protecting those values and principles and in extending their benefits. We have rejected the discredited theory that the fortunes of the Nation should be in the hands of a privileged few. We have abandoned the "trickledown" concept of national prosperity. Instead, we believe that our economic system should rest on a democratic foundation and that wealth should be created for the benefit of all.

The recent election shows that the people of the United States are in favor of this kind of society and want to go on improving it.

The American people have decided that poverty is just as wasteful and just as unnecessary as preventable disease. We have pledged our common resources to help one another in the hazards and struggles of individual life. We believe that no unfair prejudice or artificial distinction should bar any citizen of the United States of America from an education, or from good health, or from a job that he is capable of performing.

The attainment of this kind of society demands the best efforts of every citizen in every walk of life, and it imposes increasing responsibilities on the Government.

The Government must work with industry, labor, and the farmers in keeping our economy running at full speed. The Government must see that every American has a chance to obtain his fair share of our increasing abundance. These responsibilities go hand in hand.

We cannot maintain prosperity unless we have a fair distribution of opportunity and a widespread consumption of the products of our factories and farms.

Our Government has undertaken to meet these responsibilities.

We have made tremendous public investments in highways, hydroelectric power projects, soil conservation, and reclamation.

We have established a system of social security. We have enacted laws protecting the rights and the welfare of our working people and the income of our farmers. These Federal policies have paid for themselves many times over. They have strengthened the material foundations of our democratic ideals. Without them, our present prosperity would be impossible.

Reinforced by these policies, our private enterprise system has reached new heights of production. Since the boom year of 1929, while our population has increased by only 20 percent, our agricultural production has increased by 45 percent, and our industrial production has increased by 75 percent. We are turning out far more goods and more wealth per worker than we have ever done before...

The strength of our Nation must continue to be used in the interest of all our people rather than a privileged few. It must continue to be used unselfishly in the struggle for world peace and the betterment of mankind the world over.

This is the task before us. It is not an easy one. It has many complications, and there will be strong opposition from selfish interests.

I hope for cooperation from farmers, from labor, and from business. Every segment of our population and every individual has a right to expect from our Government a fair deal.

In 1945, when I came down before the Congress for the first time on April 16, I quoted to you King Solomon's prayer that he wanted wisdom and the ability to govern his people as they should be governed. I explained to you at that time that the task before me was one of the greatest in the history of the world, and that it was necessary to have the complete cooperation of the Congress and the people of the United States.

Well now, we are taking a new start with the same situation. It is absolutely essential that your President have the complete cooperation of the Congress to carry out the great work that must be done to keep the peace in this world, and to keep this country prosperous.

The people of this great country have a right to expect that the Congress and the President will work in closest cooperation with one objective—the welfare of the people of this Nation as a whole.

In the months ahead I know that I shall be able to cooperate with this Congress.

Now, I am confident that the Divine Power which has guided us to this time of fateful responsibility and glorious opportunity will not desert us now.

With that help from Almighty God which we have humbly acknowledged at every turning point in our national life, we shall be able to perform the great tasks which He now sets before us.

The Progressive Story in Action, President Obama in Osawatomie, KS, 2011

My grandparents served during World War II. He was a soldier in Patton's army; she was a worker on a bomber assembly line. And together, they shared the optimism of a nation that triumphed over the Great Depression and over fascism. **They believed in an America where hard work paid off, and responsibility was rewarded, and anyone could make it if they tried—no matter who you were, no matter where you came from, no matter how you started out.**

And these values gave rise to the largest middle class and the strongest economy that the world has ever known. It was here in America that the most productive workers, the most innovative companies turned out the best products on Earth. And you know what? Every American shared in that pride and in that success—from those in the executive suites to those in middle management to those on the factory floor. So you could have some confidence that if you gave it your all, you'd take enough home to raise your family and send your kids to school and have your health care covered, put a little away for retirement.

Today, we're still home to the world's most productive workers. We're still home to the world's most innovative companies. But for most Americans, the basic bargain that made this country great has eroded. Long before the recession hit, hard work stopped paying off for too many people. Fewer and fewer of the folks who contributed to the success of our economy actually benefited from that success. Those at the very top grew wealthier from their incomes and their investments—wealthier than ever before. But everybody else struggled with costs that were growing and paychecks that weren't—and too many families found themselves racking up more and more debt just to keep up.

Now, for many years, credit cards and home equity loans papered over this harsh reality. But in 2008, the house of cards collapsed. We all know the story by now: mortgages sold to people who couldn't afford them, or even sometimes understand them. Banks and investors allowed to keep packaging the risk and selling it off. Huge bets—and huge bonuses—made with other people's money on the line. Regulators who were supposed to warn us about the dangers of all this, but looked the other way or didn't have the authority to look at all.

It was wrong. It combined the breathtaking greed of a few with irresponsibility all across the system. And it plunged our economy and the world into a crisis from which we're still fighting to recover. It claimed the jobs and the homes and the basic security of millions of people—innocent, hardworking Americans who had met their responsibilities but were still left holding the bag.

And ever since, there's been a raging debate over the best way to restore growth and prosperity, restore balance, restore fairness. Throughout the country, it's sparked protests and political movements—from the Tea Party to the people who've been occupying the streets of New York and other cities. It's left Washington in a near-constant state of gridlock. It's been the topic of heated and sometimes colorful discussion among the men and women running for president.

But, Osawatomie, this is not just another political debate. This is the defining issue of our time. This is a make-or-break moment for the middle class, and for all those who are fighting to get into the middle class. Because what's at stake is whether this will be a country where working people can earn enough to raise a family, build a modest savings, own a home, secure their retirement. Now, in the midst of this debate, there are some who seem to be suffering from a kind of collective amnesia. After all that's happened, after the worst economic crisis, the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, they want to return to the same practices that got us into this mess. In fact, they want to go back to the same policies that stacked the deck against middle-class Americans for way too many years. And their philosophy is simple: We are better off when everybody is left to fend for themselves and play by their own rules.

I am here to say they are wrong. **I'm here in Kansas to reaffirm my deep conviction that we're greater together than we are on our own. I believe that this country succeeds when everyone gets a fair shot, when everyone does their fair share, when everyone plays by the same rules.** These aren't Democratic values or Republican values. These aren't 1% values or 99% values. They're American values. And we have to reclaim them.

The Progressive Story in Action: What Have Progressives Done for Me Lately?

Many rights and opportunities that we take for granted in contemporary America exist only because of the efforts of generations of progressives fighting to improve our country. A partial list of major accomplishments over more than 100 years includes:

The constitutional right to vote, full legal equality and protections against discrimination for women and minorities

The financing and building of railways and canals, roads and bridges, electrification and the infrastructure investments that led to the creation of the Internet

Federal insurance of bank deposits

Universal educational opportunities including public primary and secondary schools and colleges; college loans and grants for students; and the GI Bill that helps our military veterans continue their education after serving our country

National supervision of banks and the creation of a flexible national currency

Bans on speculative banking practices

The establishment of peer-reviewed research and development programs

The graduated income and inheritance tax

The eight-hour workday and 40-hour workweek

Prohibitions against child labor and workplace exploitations

Protections against contaminated food and medicines

Hundreds of millions of acres of protected wilderness areas, waterways and national parks

Antimonopoly and anticompetitive regulations of corporations

The legal right of people to organize within labor unions and engage in collective bargaining for fair wages and benefits

Worker's compensation for on-the-job accidents and unemployment insurance

Refinancing and foreclosure protections for home and farm owners

Social Security and Medicare to aid the elderly and Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and the Affordable Care Act to provide health coverage for families, children and the poor

Minimum wage laws and income support for the working poor

Part II: Progressive Values, Beliefs and Positions



DEVELOPING A PROGRESSIVE WORLDVIEW

A concise, coherent and compelling progressive vision for America rests on three, fundamental building blocks, which will be explored in detail in this section. They are:

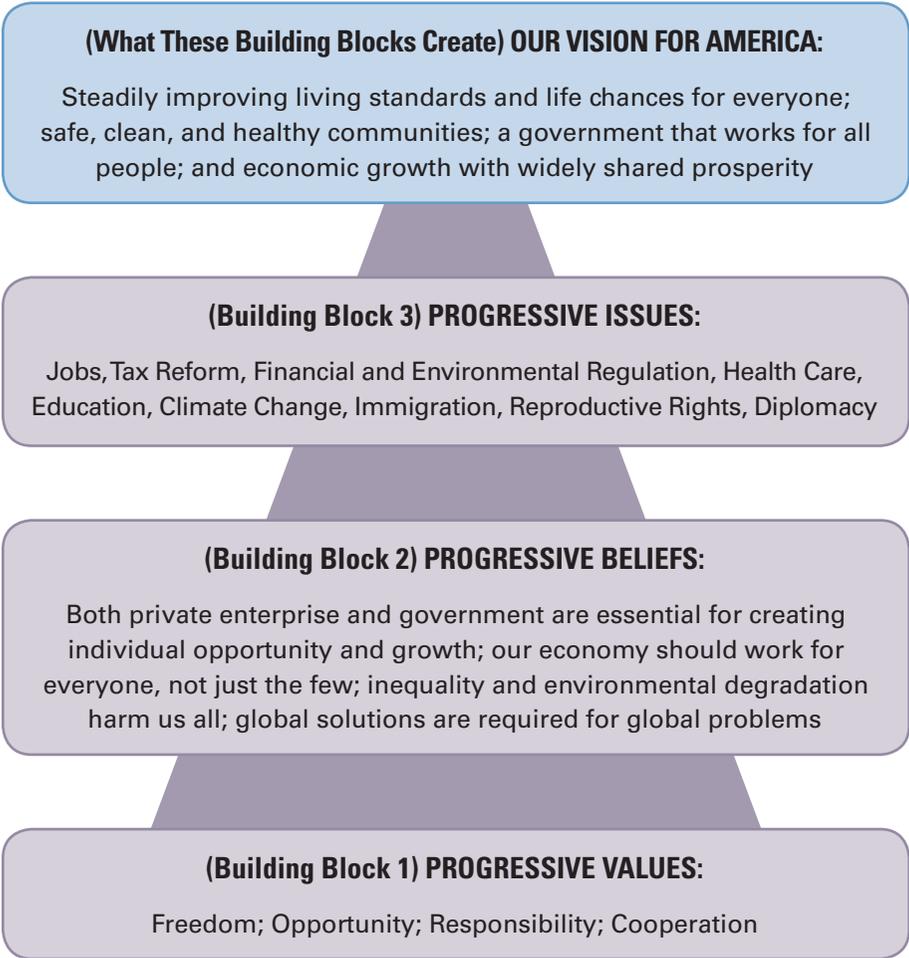
- Our Values
- Our Beliefs
- Our Issues

As **Figure 1** highlights, our values, beliefs and issues build on and support our vision for America, with values occupying the bottom and most important tier, philosophical beliefs the middle tier and issues the top tier. The pyramid points, ultimately, to our vision of the society we are trying to create—steadily improving living standards and opportunities for everyone; safe, clean and healthy communities; a government that works for all people; and economic growth with widely shared prosperity. The entire pyramid then becomes an outline of our central progressive message: “Everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does his or her fair share, and everyone plays by the same rules.”

Some progressives tend to be overly analytical in their communications, favoring discussions of issues and policy rather than venturing into the sometimes murky territory of morals, values and core beliefs. But if we want more people to connect with a progressive view of the world, we need to reach their hearts *and* their heads. As the architecture of this pyramid highlights, core progressive values form the most important level of our communications, with political beliefs and issue positions building on this values foundation. Implied is the need to articulate our values and beliefs as much, if not more than, we discuss our positions on the issues—as a way to highlight our broad, common ground.

The central ideas behind each of these three building blocks—values, beliefs, and issues—follow.

Figure 1: Central Progressive Message: Everyone Gets a Fair Shot, Everyone Does His or Her Fair Share, and Everyone Plays By the Same Rules



BUILDING BLOCK ONE: Progressive Values



OUR VALUES

While progressives draw inspiration from a number of political and moral sources, there are three primary foundations for progressive values: 1) the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, 2) faith traditions, and 3) personal and historical experience. (*See Appendices A-C for elaboration on these.*)

Each of the values discussed below has at some point been invoked by progressives to help explain what we are fighting for and against. At the most basic level, the progressive story is built on care and concern for oneself and others, and the duty to act on this concern. Progressives believe fundamentally in the quintessential dignity of each human being—and thus, to be progressive means you care about the conditions and lives of other people; you live and work in supportive communities and respect people with different views and backgrounds; you work hard to achieve personal success and fulfillment; and you feel a sense of duty to those around you and in other places, particularly the vulnerable, the exploited and those lacking the ability to care for themselves. Progressives believe we all do better when we all do better.

In terms of governing, progressives believe deeply in *democracy*, meaning the rights and obligations of citizens to engage in self-government and determine the priorities, leadership and policies of our nation. Democracy, in its simplest form, means creating a government “of, by, and for the people” and a political order responsive to the needs and desires of the people. This means removing the negative influence of money from politics, which skews politics toward the interests of a few, and reducing the outsized influence of large corporations and the wealthy on public policies. We must also balance our belief in democracy with other values, including individual rights. We should pursue policies that advance the needs of the majority while protecting the rights of minorities.

Although more of a guiding principle than a core value, progressives also place a premium on *pragmatism* over dogmatism in our approach to politics. Pragmatism involves a willingness to evaluate policies based on real-world consequences and consider decisions based on the best available evidence and scientific knowledge. Pragmatism is not about compromising on core principles, shrinking from a fight or accepting watered-down policies simply to avoid conflict. Rather, a commitment to pragmatism means acting with a spirit of inquiry; openness to new ideas, facts and research; common sense; experimentation; and a willingness to change direction when policies or ideas are not working.

To summarize progressives' basic political values: **We believe in freedom with opportunity for all, responsibility from all, and cooperation among all.**

The Four Pillars of Progressive Values

The four pillars of progressive values are:

1. **Freedom.** The most basic progressive value is *freedom*. Progressives understand that societal good flows from and depends upon the glorious achievements of free women and men—that affirmative, free and self-actualizing human beings are the soul of a democratic nation that advances individual economic and civil liberties. In this light, progressives define freedom in two ways: “freedom from” and “freedom to.” First, we believe all people should have *freedom from* undue interference by governments and others in carrying out their private affairs and personal beliefs. This includes our rights to freedom of speech, association and religion as well as the freedom to control our own bodies and personal lives. Second, we believe all people should have the *freedom to* lead fulfilling and secure lives supported by the basic foundations of economic security and opportunity. This includes physical protections against bodily harm as well as adequate income, economic protections, health care and education, and other social provisions. As President Franklin D. Roosevelt stated, “(T)rue individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence.” (See Appendix F for more on FDR’s vision of freedom.)
2. **Opportunity.** Complementing our commitment to human freedom is our belief in opportunity. The pursuit of individual economic and civil freedom requires that we each have the opportunity to use our special abilities, talents and hard work to their fullest extent. And because the world is not always fair and just, we believe effective government plays an essential role in ensuring that freedom is tempered with justice so that all people—irrespective of their abilities, talent, luck and circumstances—have the security and opportunity to live with dignity and pursue their full potential. Like freedom, the concept of opportunity has two components: one focuses on political equality and the other on economic and social arrangements that enhance our lives. The first component of opportunity prohibits discrimination against anyone based on race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious faith or non-faith or disability. It also embraces the diversity of American society by ensuring all people—not just the rich and powerful or dominant racial and ethnic groups—have the chance to turn their talents and ambitions

into a meaningful life. The second component of opportunity involves the conditions necessary for people to be secure and move up in life—health care, education, a decent job, labor rights, a secure retirement.

3. **Responsibility.** Along with freedom and opportunity, progressives value *responsibility*—personal responsibility and the responsibility we have to each other and to the common good. Personal responsibility requires we each do our part to improve our own lives through hard work, education and by acting with honesty and integrity. Responsibility to others and to the common good requires a commitment to putting the public interest above the interests of a few, as well as an understanding that strong families and communities are the foundation of a good society. It means working to achieve greater social justice and economic conditions that benefit civil society broadly. It demands an open and honest government and an engaged and participatory citizenry.

Responsibility to others is based on the notion that “we’re all in this together,” and must meet our common duties to aid the disadvantaged, protect our natural resources and leave the country in decent shape for future generations. This requires public investments in things like transportation and trade, innovation, a skilled workforce, courts to protect patent rights and contract agreements, public safety and other measures that support the creation of wealth and help make individual prosperity possible. It also requires progressive taxation, meaning those who enjoy the highest levels of that wealth and prosperity should pay their fair share to help support investments in things like schools, transportation and economic competitiveness that are necessary to advance the interests of all. Responsible businesses give back to the communities that enable them to be successful.

A key component of responsibility involves ecological and social sustainability. This requires ongoing stewardship of our land, water, air and natural resources; smart use of energy; and the responsible consumption of goods. It means individuals, families, communities, corporations and governments align their living and economic habits with environmental and social considerations and ensure we leave our nation and our planet in good shape for the future.

4. **Cooperation.** Rounding out these political values—which are primarily directed at the rights, opportunities, and duties of individuals—is the basic progressive value of cooperation. Cooperation is the foundation of our most important social institutions including our families, our communities, and our civic and faith groups. Freedom without cooperation leads to

a divided society that cannot work together to achieve common goals. Cooperation as a value requires we try to be open-minded and empathetic toward others and that we are accountable for their well-being as they are accountable to us. Progressives believe that if we blindly pursue our own needs and ignore those of others, our society will degenerate.

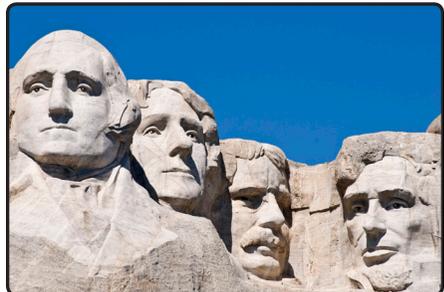
Successful families and communities cannot exist without cooperation. We also value human interdependence on a larger scale and accept the importance of looking beyond our own needs to help others and find global solutions to global problems.

Core, Shared and Contested Values

We have tried to condense progressive values into the essential ideals that ground our political beliefs and issue positions. Based on an analysis of progressive history and philosophy, it seems clear that the four pillars, or *core values*, that define our politics and relationships are freedom, opportunity, responsibility and cooperation. This is not to discount other important values but rather to help focus our discussion of values for the purposes of political advocacy and communication.

American society is built upon a number of individual and common values that bind us together and define our identities. Although by no means universal, these *shared values* are so widely accepted and promoted that most people instinctively know the meaning of these values and recognize their importance. Some of these shared values include: *family, faith, patriotism, honesty, integrity, individual initiative and hard work*. People across the ideological spectrum believe deeply in these values, and we should recognize this vast common ground in our own efforts to reach out to others.

It is important to recognize that values discussions are often abstract and subjective. Americans bring different meanings and experiences to the debate over values and often hold strong opinions about what these values actually represent. For example, *freedom* and *fairness* are two of the most *contested values* in American politics. Consequently, the fundamental differences between progressives and conservatives about the meaning of freedom and fairness often define our most divisive political battles.



BUILDING BLOCK TWO: Progressive Beliefs About Government, the Economy and National Security



PROGRESSIVE BELIEFS

Built upon the foundational values explained in the previous section, the beliefs highlighted here serve as the philosophical framework for progressive positions on political issues and provide a set of guidelines for how we seek to build a better society.

Remember that progressives are advancing a public philosophy that helps us interpret problems and create solutions, not dogma that is unchanging regardless of the facts and situation at hand. As described in the section on values, the commitment to empirical evidence and real-world consequences distinguishes the progressive approach to governing, as does the progressive commitment to care about our world and to act responsibly on that care.

Progressive Beliefs About The Role of Government

As the preamble and accompanying text of the U.S. Constitution clearly describe (*Appendix A*), our national government embodies our collective will as a people and grants our representative bodies in the legislative, executive and judicial branches the authority to do what is necessary to protect our rights and advance our common purposes as a nation. Progressives prize individual freedom and recognize that good government can both secure and enable individual achievement. As the defenders of smart and effective government action, progressives have a responsibility to explain how our representative government enables us to cooperate and do things together that we can't do alone. Government is not the only form of cooperation or even the primary one—we also should strive for cooperation in our private lives, in our communities, and in civil society and the economy—but effective government is vital to advancing the common good.

The unique mission and purpose of government is to promote the public interest and help create a high quality of life and community well-being. Government in the U.S. has four primary functions as outlined in our founding documents and as developed through various legislative, executive and judicial actions throughout American history:

1. ***Our government exists to secure and protect our rights.*** These include our rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; our First Amendment rights to free speech and worship and other constitutional rights; the right to individual conscience and to determine the course of one's life; and the right to be free of discrimination and unfair treatment.

2. ***Our government exists to protect us from harm.*** This includes protections of our lives and property; defense against foreign threats; assistance with natural disasters and emergencies; safe food, consumer goods and medicines; clean air and water; and protections against economic hardship, poverty, disability and unemployment.
3. ***Our government exists to expand opportunity.*** As the Declaration of Independence states, governments are instituted to secure our rights to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” Opportunity is a core part of this formula. Opportunity in modern life requires hard work and personal dedication. But it also requires adequate education, housing and health care; a decent job with a living wage and good benefits; avenues for building and saving wealth over our lives; and a secure retirement. In a society that values the dignity and potential of all human beings, our government is an essential tool for promoting these engines of opportunity. Similarly, our government is necessary to help set national priorities for jobs and growth; put in place large-scale national projects on things like energy and infrastructure that businesses and local communities will not or cannot undertake on their own; help our workers and companies compete globally; and invest in science, research, innovation and technology that fuel economic growth.
4. ***Our government exists to provide the foundations of prosperity and ensure fair market competition.*** The public systems and institutions we have built and maintained for generations—the rule of law and investments in transportation, research and development, public safety, education and health care—are the foundation of our economy, the tools for our individual and societal prosperity and the mechanisms for creating opportunity and a strong and resilient middle class. Given the complexity and instability of economic activity, our government has evolved over time to regulate the market economy through constitutional, legislative and executive actions. These governmental duties include steps to monitor overall risks to the economy; manage the money supply and credit of the nation; handle financial collapse and other failures in ways that help build the larger economy; protect consumers against corporate fraud and other abuses; create regulations to stop pollution and overuse of resources; and use progressive taxation to support investments in public goods such as roads, transportation, health care, schools and parks that help us individually and as a society.

Above all, progressives believe our government belongs to us as free citizens committed to working together to create prosperity, provide opportunity and security, and solve the nation's problems in a smart and effective manner.

Progressive Beliefs About the Economy

Progressives today understand the important role markets play in producing wealth, creating jobs, devising new products and services, and meeting the needs of individuals and consumers. But they also know markets sometimes fail and, even in good times, have real limits. As history shows, poorly regulated market economies are prone to boom-and-bust speculation, anti-competitive behavior, eroding protections for workers and corporate irresponsibility. The progressive approach to the economy seeks to build the foundations of national prosperity and harness the best aspects of markets, as well as guard against their excesses.

Thus, the progressive approach strikes a critical balance between private and public actions, coupled with government investments, regulation, and social and environmental protections. Understood, too, is the interdependence of the public and private sectors: absent government investments and oversight, markets cannot generate wealth for long. The historical progressive economic principles outlined below are essential to maintaining America's economic success. *(For more detail, refer to Appendix D: Progressive Beliefs About the Economy: An Elaboration.)*

1. ***Both private enterprise and government are essential to economic growth and job creation.*** America did not become the wealthiest and most successful nation on earth without the positive contributions of both the private and public sectors. We need private initiative, competition and reasonable rewards for risk-taking to help generate new ideas, companies and jobs that produce growth and wealth. We need a strong legal and regulatory framework for ensuring the protection of workers' rights and safety in both the public and private sectors. We need a fair rule of law, a properly functioning regulatory system and public investments in the foundations of growth and jobs—innovation, transportation and trade, infrastructure, education, health care, and other social protections and opportunity measures—to ensure our economy produces widely shared prosperity.
2. ***Our economy should work for everyone, not just the few.*** Everyone who is willing and able to work should be able to find a

job that provides fair wages, benefits and working conditions. Work is essential to individual dignity, and full employment is essential to a vibrant and growing economy. Progressives therefore want to bring down unemployment from its current highs and create conditions in which almost all workers can find jobs at reasonable wages.¹ Full employment, in turn, gives workers more leverage in the labor market, helping facilitate decent wages that rise for everyone as the economy and productivity grow. For decades, most Americans' living standards have risen only sluggishly, while those at the top have soared. Progressives are committed to ensuring all hard-working Americans share equitably in the benefits of economic growth.

3. ***All Americans should pay their fair share to support the retirement security and public foundations of individual and national prosperity.*** Taxes are what we pay as Americans to ensure we have a strong society and an economy with rising opportunity for all. Successive rounds of tax cuts favored by conservatives have benefited the wealthy and corporations disproportionately. These cuts have threatened necessary funding for public investments in health, education, economic competitiveness and infrastructure and contributed to exploding federal, state and municipal budget deficits. This practice is comparable to emptying your child's college education fund to splurge on a vacation—it jeopardizes the future for short-term advantage. To raise the revenue needed to invest in America and pay our bills, we must return to a more truly progressive tax system that recognizes and treats all types of income more equitably.
4. ***Our economy should support strong families, not undermine them.*** The purpose of the economy is to enhance human life through production of goods and services and to promote stronger, more economically secure families and communities through hard work and rising wealth. But the current structure of our workplaces and governmental policies neglects the changing needs of today's families. With women now making up half the U.S. workforce, it is high time our policies evolved



to ensure more flexibility between work and family life, provide equal pay for equal work, and offer more help and support with care of children and the elderly. We need to ensure workers are able to meet the challenges of the workplace and still provide needed care for their families.

5. ***A strong middle class is both the source and result of an economy that's working for everyone.***

A progressive definition of a strong economy is not simply one that delivers positive GDP or productivity growth. It is one in which the benefits of that growth are broadly shared. In recent decades, this hasn't been the case, as economic expansions have proceeded apace but middle- and lower-income families have not gained their fair share of the growth they helped produce.

In earlier periods, a strong middle class was closely linked to a successful economy. In the three decades after World War II, America's domestic policies pioneered the creation of the world's first mass middle class, assisted by the rise in union membership in both the private and public sectors. Policies of widely shared prosperity and fair rules were essential to middle-class success in that era. In contrast, poor economic performance, especially in the past decade, correlates strongly with the decline of a strong middle class.

It is our belief that these dynamics are related: a strong economy supports and develops a strong middle class, and a strong, growing middle class, with broad purchasing power, helps support a robust economy.

A strong middle class cannot be sustained without strong protections for American workers. Unfortunately, the right to join a union and advocate for better pay and working conditions is under steady attack. These attacks directly threaten the middle class by reducing the ability of workers to bargain for their fair share of the rewards of rising productivity and business success.

6. ***Reducing social divisions and increasing opportunities for all Americans strengthens our economy.*** The overall goal of progressive economic policy is not to produce strict equality but rather to ensure that "a rising tide lifts all boats," as it did during the post-war period. The gains from increased productivity in our economy over the past few decades have not been widely shared, thus reducing our future ability to grow and produce more goods and services. A smaller proportion of Americans commanding more and more income and wealth cannot

drive robust growth. Progressives believe reducing inequality through full employment, progressive taxation and programs to support work, education and social mobility will lead to a stronger economy with faster growth and more opportunity for the average person to get ahead. Public policy must ensure that all work has dignity and a family-supporting wage, particularly as many of the job categories that are projected to create the most jobs over the next few decades do not require a college education.

At the same time, demographic data show that racial and ethnic diversity are key to the future of our American middle class and prospects for growth. In the last decade, 93 percent of population growth has been among minorities, who currently constitute 36 percent of the U.S. population.² By around 2040, communities of color will be the new majority. If this segment of the population is able to enter the middle class in large numbers, our economy will grow faster and better than it is today. America needs a diverse, well-educated and well-trained workforce to compete in the global economy. Similarly, women are major players in today's economy yet women workers—mothers and women of color, in particular—continue to earn less than men in similar working positions. This wage disparity is economically backward and harms the security of America's families. *(The effects of inequality on the economy are discussed more fully in Appendix E.)*

7. Clean energy and innovation are vital for long-term growth and prosperity. The long-term success of our nation and the well-being of our people will require us to move from a short-term-focused, high-carbon economy to a more efficient, low-carbon economy sustainable for the long term. The evidence is overwhelming that our wasteful and excessive use of fossil fuels and other natural resources is harming our nation, threatening our economy, and warming our planet. By moving to cleaner, more innovative and less wasteful ways to produce and consume energy, we can encourage job creation and growth, improve our health and communities and create a society and economy that are built to last.

Progressives understand that a proper balance between private and public actions—coupled with government investments, regulation and social and environmental protections—is essential to maintaining America's economic success.

Progressive Beliefs About National Security and Foreign Affairs

America is the first nation created explicitly on a set of ideals considered to be universal to humankind. Our struggles to ensure all people—at home and across the globe—have genuine rights and access to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” have helped make America an exceptional nation and a global leader.

Although we have fallen short of our founding creed at times throughout our history, the American people and government have continuously sought to build a better democracy and economic system based on many of the progressive values and beliefs explained earlier. This U.S. commitment to political freedom, entrepreneurship, a mixed economy, and personal liberation and advancement has provided a platform and example for international leadership. As a result of our values and exceptional status, America took the lead in developing the post-World War II era of international cooperation and economic integration that led to increased freedom and prosperity for people worldwide.

Progressives throughout our history have been both the defenders of democracy from outside threats and the conscience of a nation on matters of war. Although these two traditions are not always compatible, there are common themes to a progressive approach to security and international issues.

1. ***Progressives believe in the just use of force.*** In a democracy, we entrust our leaders with the responsibility to defend the lives of our people and protect us from harm. And as a country based in freedom, we believe in supporting other groups or nations facing persecution and hardship as they struggle to bring about their own freedoms and democratic governments. War, however, is always the last resort for progressives—conducted in accordance with our democratic values and international laws, and initiated only after we have exhausted all diplomatic, economic and political alternatives. Our strong preference is always for peaceful and cooperative resolution of global problems over military action.

When military action is necessary, progressives believe we must work cooperatively with our allies and deploy all necessary resources and means to achieve a clear, quick and decisive victory while minimizing U.S. and civilian casualties. We must never shrink from responding with strength to acts of aggression against our nation, and we must never send American soldiers to war without a clear rationale for being

there or the strategy and resources necessary for victory. As well, we must never fail to uphold our obligations to provide appropriate care and support for returning veterans who have sacrificed so much in service to our country.

2. ***Progressives believe national strength starts at home.***

American leadership requires us to first build a strong representative democracy at home with a solid educational system, a healthy and safe population, a growing economy, and a commitment to uphold the liberties and rights of our own people. This domestic strength gives us the national cohesion, legitimacy and financial strength to face challenges abroad. Our military budget must not undermine these other crucial elements of strength at home; rather, it must be commensurate with actual threats and must be balanced with economic and social needs at home.



3. ***Progressives are committed to universal human rights.*** We believe in the need to support civil and political rights that provide freedom from oppression, as well as social and economic rights that create an equal playing field and a basic level of economic opportunity to gain the freedom to determine one's own destiny. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which America played a leadership role in drafting after World War II, is a non-binding yet deeply influential statement of global beliefs in the rights and opportunities of all people and includes one of the finest expressions of our commitment to these principles: "All people are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

4. ***Progressives believe the world should know America not just through its military might but through our culture, people, and creativity.*** In a world that contains not only threats, but also opportunities and many shades in between, we are safer and advance pro-American sentiment by showing the beauty of our culture and the best of our country to the world, not by becoming a fortress state. The U.S. must use the full arsenal of its powers—moral, diplomatic, economic, military and social—to advance the nation's interests and ensure global stability.

5. ***Progressives believe that, in an interdependent world, global solutions are necessary for global problems.*** In practice, this means we recognize the international nature of today's problems from terrorism and nuclear threats to poverty and climate change. It means the U.S. cannot and should not try to solve these problems on its own.

America's interests will not be advanced by imposing our values on others or by forcing nations to live as we do. We must work in concert with our allies through strong and effective international organization and collaboration and an unshrinking commitment to human rights and strength at home.

BUILDING BLOCK THREE: Progressive Positions on Major Issues



FOUNDATIONAL NARRATIVE FOR DISCUSSING THE ISSUES

Building Block Three: Progressive Positions on Major Issues provides high-level guidance about what progressives want to achieve, how we propose to get there and what stands in the way of this progress. What follows are not exhaustive debating points or the exact answers to challenging problems but simple, one-page frameworks for discussing our basic positions on national issues.

The issues highlighted here are complex, and disagreement is expected—disagreement and debate are vital to a principled, progressive discourse that is committed to facts, data and real-world evidence about what works. Still, some values and beliefs are core. As progressives:

- We believe in freedom with opportunity for all, responsibility from all and cooperation among all.
- We believe the purpose of government is to advance the common good, to secure and protect our rights, and to help to create a high quality of life and community well-being.
- We want decent paying jobs and benefits for workers and sustainable economic growth.
- We want cleaner, more innovative ways to produce and consume energy.
- We want growing businesses producing the world’s best products and services.
- We want an economy that works for everyone, not just the few.
- We want all nations to uphold universal human rights, to cherish human dignity and to work together to solve common challenges.
- We want a country that fosters and celebrates individual achievement while investing in the common good that makes all success possible.

Although it may not be feasible or desirable to launch every discussion about issues with an overview of our values and beliefs, they do offer a helpful way to communicate why we believe certain policies are necessary and what our principles are for measuring success. Without an explanation of our core convictions, all the well-intentioned policy positions in the world likely will fail to inspire others to join our efforts.

We have tried to condense the discussion of issues into a concise framework with four main directives: **define the vision, define the problem, define the solution and define the opposition.** Even like-minded progressives will find themselves in disagreement at times about policy directions and the interpretation of facts. Our objective is not to paper over these differences but instead to provide high-level guidance for informed discussion, debate and consensus.

JOBS AND THE ECONOMY

Define the Vision

We want a growing economy with widely shared prosperity, internationally competitive businesses, and well-educated and well-paid workers. We want an economy that works for everyone, not just the few. We all do better when we all do better.

Define the Problem

For decades after World War II, Americans created and expanded businesses and jobs in record numbers. Family incomes rose significantly, and increasing wealth was widely shared across many strata of our population. But our position in the global economy is increasingly challenged by the rise of global competitiveness, pressures on natural resources and the failed precepts of laissez-faire economics and politics.

For more than 30 years, wages for the middle class and poor have stagnated or gone down in real terms, and workers' rights have eroded. Over the same time period, those at the top have prospered and seized the lion's share of economic growth. We're still suffering through the Great Recession fostered by you're-on-your-own economic policies, with high unemployment, a depressed housing market and stagnant wages.

Define the Solution

Things don't have to be this way. Our history shows that when progressive values of fairness, opportunity and the common good are paramount, the economy can deliver for everybody. That starts with a commitment to full employment: Every American who wants to work should be able to get a job that pays a decent wage. We must protect workers' rights to bargain and ensure all workers are treated fairly and receive decent wages and benefits in exchange for their contributions to building successful businesses and communities. We must support and encourage private enterprise—big and small—to be innovative, entrepreneurial, and inclusive, working in partnership with our government. The overall goals are a vibrant and growing middle class—the engine of the economy—and a healthy, innovative, responsible and successful business sector that is enhanced by a strong alliance between private enterprise and government.

We must also commit to making the increased investment in education, scientific research, transportation and trade that we need for a 21st century economy. In the last 30 years, we have fallen behind, leaving our economy and people at a disadvantage in today's global economy.

With a stronger middle class, government and business partnerships, and increased investment, we can grow faster and more equitably, leading to rising living standards for all.

Define the Opposition

Conservatives too often have risked the well-being of the middle class to protect the privileges of the well-connected and the very wealthy. Their policies have given big corporations and powerful special interests free reign to advance their own prosperity at the expense of the common good, eroding American jobs and leading to a declining living standard for increasing numbers of Americans. American household wealth has slipped considerably in comparison to some other countries. History demonstrates that more people benefit from progressive approaches to jobs and the economy than from conservative ones.

(For more on this topic, see Appendix E: How Inequality Harms Our Economy and Society.)

TAXES AND DEFICITS

Define the Vision

Taxes are what we pay as citizens to help keep our communities thriving and our economy stable. We want a tax system that enables us to meet our obligations as a country—a system in which we all pay our fair share, help support the foundations of a strong and growing economy, and do not burden future generations with crippling national debt.

Define the Problem

Our country faces enormous budget challenges over the coming years that cannot be ignored. We need to revitalize our economy and create more good jobs. We need affordable health care. To promote individual achievement and success, we need better schools and greater access to higher education. We need energy transformation. We need to conclude a war and protect the nation from terrorist attacks.

And we need to do all of this while addressing unsustainable budget deficits. At the time of this writing, the U.S. national debt is equal to more than \$50,000 for every man, woman and child in the country. If current trends continue, the ratio of our national debt to our gross domestic product (GDP) will rise to crippling levels. Deficit spending is necessary during times of economic weakness or during other national emergencies. Excessive deficit spending, however, particularly in periods of economic expansion, puts pressure on funding for a wide variety of important government programs and imperils overall economic growth. We must change our approach and increase revenue, especially from those who are not paying their fair share; at the same time, we must recognize that, for the very poor—those who simply do not have the means to pay—a lower amount or even nothing at all actually is their fair share. We must eliminate government waste and employ a new and more accountable discipline in budgets and expenditures. As a nation, we must be honest with ourselves and face up to our responsibility to help pay for a decent society, keep our economy growing and expand opportunity for all.

Define the Solution

For years, the wealthiest Americans and biggest corporations have been getting a free ride in the form of excessive tax cuts, tax breaks and tax loopholes. It's time for them to pay their fair share to keep the country strong.

First, we must end tax cuts for the richest Americans and treat all sources of income, including sources such as capital gains and stock dividends, more equitably. Those who make more generally use more of the nation's common equity and should pay more.

Second, we must maintain a significant estate tax and reinstate the 2009 policy with a top tax level of 45 percent and an exemption of \$3.5 million per person, a policy position with significant bipartisan support.

Third, we must close the "carried interest" and overseas and offshore tax loopholes that allow some of the wealthiest Americans and multinational corporations to escape paying their fair share of taxes. We need to end subsidies for big oil and gas companies. And we need to hold the financial sector accountable for its risky behavior, implying the need for a small "financial speculation tax."

Fourth, we must eliminate government waste, increase efficiency and rationalize our expenditures on the basis of need and impact. The size of our military budget should correlate with the threats to our safety, and health care costs can be reduced by focusing on quality care at reasonable prices.

Define the Opposition

No one wants to pay more taxes, but we all should do our fair share. Conservatives want to preserve tax cuts and low rates for the rich, at any cost—ignoring the considerable body of solid evidence that such policies contribute to inequality and mounting budget deficits. Government action is vital to promoting individual opportunity and securing national priorities, but it doesn't come for free. Tax breaks for wealthy Americans will not solve our national problems and spending cuts alone will not rein in the deficits.

Tax reform and tax increases must be on the table if we are going to deal with budget deficits and take our responsibilities as a nation seriously.

HEALTH CARE

Define the Vision

Basic health care is a human right and an essential component of our economy. It should be treated as such. No one in a country this rich should lack health insurance coverage. Since the market cannot provide this coverage for everyone, the government has a responsibility to step in and make sure affordable coverage is available to all.

Define the Problem

We spend the most on health care per capita of any advanced country and get poor value for our money, as measured in health outcomes. Health-care costs are projected to continue rising rapidly, one of the largest causes of our poor, long-term fiscal outlook. And with all that money spent, we still fail to provide health insurance for 44 million Americans. Another 38 million have inadequate coverage. That means almost a third of Americans go through their days without any real health-care security, frequently skimping on needed preventive care. Many of us are just one serious illness away from financial ruin.

Define the Solution

Our nation must slow the growth of spending throughout the health-care system. Other countries do more, including providing universal coverage, and spend far less. We must restructure the system so excessive profits and waste are wrung out of it and incentives are strengthened for good patient care and health outcomes. In short, health first, profits second.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA), while not perfect, is a huge first step toward achieving the health-care system we need. Through a combination of subsidies, employer and insurer requirements, Medicaid expansion, and individual mandates, the health system will be restructured so the number of uninsured declines drastically. Insurance companies will no longer be able to deny coverage because of pre-existing conditions, drop coverage because of existing conditions or impose lifetime caps on payment. The ACA also puts in place a series of reforms to control costs through improving efficiency, eliminating waste and increasing price competition. Our future challenge is to take further steps to control the growth of system-wide health care costs.

Define the Opposition

The ink was barely dry on the President's signature before conservatives demanded the repeal of the ACA. Why? Because the government would play a central role in expanding coverage and controlling costs, and conservatives believe that, by definition, must be wrong. But that's only wrong if government is offering something the market could provide (it can't and it hasn't) or providing something we don't need (but we do). Again, it comes down to priorities: Is it more important to leave the various profit centers in the health-care industry alone, hoping they will somehow do the right thing despite all previous evidence to the contrary? Or is it more important for government to make sure our health-care system provides all people with the care they need?

SOCIAL SECURITY AND MEDICARE

Define the Vision

The social safety net provided by Social Security and Medicare ensures the most vulnerable among us —the elderly, the sick, widows, orphans and people with disabilities—have access to health care and funds to cover basic needs. These programs are valued and strongly supported by nearly all Americans, who want to see them strengthened for the future, not decimated or privatized.

Define the Problem

We can't afford to lose the safety net provided by two of the most successful government programs in our history—programs that radically transformed old age in America so that the overwhelming majority of seniors are now out of poverty and have some basic measure of economic and health security. While these two programs are under significant fiscal pressure, they remain vital to America's seniors and other vulnerable populations. Millions of Americans who have paid for these benefits have trusted they will be available when needed, but we need to fund these programs adequately to ensure their survival.

Define the Solution

Those who depend on these services can't afford deep cuts in benefits—and such cuts aren't necessary. Social Security can be made fully solvent through raising the cap on income subject to the payroll tax. It makes no sense to have a low cap on Social Security contributions when we have no cap at all on Medicare contributions. They are both social insurance programs, and they both should be supported in a progressive way so that those who make more also pay more. Cutting benefits is also the wrong way to fix Medicare. The problem isn't with benefits, which are not generous by the standards of advanced countries, but with the inefficient structure of the health-care system, which leads to rapidly rising health-care costs. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) makes a start at controlling these costs, and these controls will need to be extended over time. But our first priority must be to defend Social Security and Medicare overall and resist the pressure to cut benefits.

Define the Opposition

Conservatives insist the only way to save Social Security and Medicare from insolvency is to privatize these programs and, ultimately, reduce benefits and services. This argument is actually a way to dodge a discussion of how we really *can* save Social Security and Medicare: Raising the cap on the Social Security payroll tax and instituting reforms to slow the growth of Medicare and system-wide health care costs. The objective should be real reform of these programs that puts them on a firm fiscal foundation, while preserving benefits.

EDUCATION

Define the Vision

Public education is critical to the American Dream and was a priority of America's founders. A high-quality education is the foundation for a good job with decent pay and benefits. Investments in education pay unparalleled dividends in personal success, quality of life, and broad societal progress. Good schools are the anchors of successful neighborhoods and communities. An educated workforce is essential to America's ability to compete with other nations in the global economy.

Define the Problem

Unfortunately, it is well established that our students have fallen behind past generations of Americans and young people in other nations. Education is not the priority it needs to be. Our teachers are undervalued in many districts, and our schools and children are neglected in too many communities. Opportunities for high-quality, affordable, early childhood education are far too limited. Nationwide, only about one-third of 4th and 8th graders—and well less than 20 percent of low-income and minority children—are proficient in reading and math. Too many of our schools allow students to move through the system without the requisite knowledge to get ahead and enter the global workforce. In education forums and statehouses across the country, we hear mounting concerns about accountability—specifically, how well our schools are meeting expectations in terms of costs, efficiency, and student outcomes.

Higher education in the United States continues to be among the best in the world, but rapid increases in costs are putting college out of reach for growing numbers of American families. Increasing reliance on loans, as opposed to scholarship and grant aid, has contributed to average student debt rising to more than \$25,000, creating a financial burden that cripples graduates through much of their working lives.

Define the Solution

Our children need to spend more time learning, from pre-K through college, with particular emphasis on early childhood education. Research has shown that participation in a high-quality preschool program continues to have positive and transformational impacts throughout a child's education and well into adulthood. Second, we need rigorous standards for achievement, and our governments must do much more to help schools and teachers meet these standards. Third, we need high-quality,

well-supported teachers and principals, which means more professional development for teachers, better pay, more decision-making authority at the local level, performance-based incentives, and more accountability for teachers who are not doing their part for our students. Fourth, at all levels of education—K-12 and higher education—we need wise investments in and use of technology to drive down costs and enhance learning. Fifth, we need to do much more to help those schools and communities that are falling behind. If we want our nation to succeed, we need to treat public education as a national priority; recruit, train and pay teachers well; invest in our public education infrastructure; and demand that our students and teachers do the best they can for themselves and for the nation.

Finally, we need national loan eligibility and repayment policies that lessen the financial burden on college students and graduates. A first step is to enact a longer-term extension of interest-rate reductions on federal loans and reinstate the grace period for interest accrual for both undergraduate and graduate students.

Define the Opposition

Too many conservatives are willing and even eager to give up on our public schools, rather than making the investments and driving the reforms needed to make the system as competitive as it must be to secure our nation’s future prosperity. America’s founders were clear about the importance of a high-quality public education system available to all, and we know that a strong system of public education is essential for individual and societal success, economically and socially. Today, our children’s education too often takes a backseat to tax cuts for the wealthy—those who can afford to pay for private schooling for their own families. A nation that values freedom and opportunity for all cannot tolerate a status quo that leaves the majority of our children undereducated and unprepared for the global economy.



IMMIGRATION

Define the Vision

America is founded on the idea that all men and women are created equal and have the right to live with dignity. Our immigration system created the great and richly diverse nation we live in today. This system of laws and policies exists to secure our borders, ensure fair treatment for immigrant families, strengthen our national economy and enrich our nation. It ensures all Americans who love this country and play by the rules get a fair chance to become citizens.

Define the Problem

Right now, America is doing none of these things well. Our borders aren't secure and too many people are living and working outside of U.S. law. Businesses exploit undocumented immigrants and use their labor and poor wages to undermine the opportunities of other workers. The immigration enforcement system is often arbitrary and punitive. Immigrants are forced to deal with a complicated and unclear process for achieving citizenship that favors some people over others and leaves many families broken. At the same time, we needlessly turn away those from other nations who offer good ideas and skills, rather than encouraging them to stay here and help build our economy and our country the way that previous generations of immigrants have since our nation's founding.

Define the Solution

The best way to secure our borders is to provide a safe, fair and orderly path for immigration into our country. This means immigrants who want to stay in America must comply with U.S. and state laws; pay taxes; and have the ability to take the necessary steps to obtain legal status. It means future immigrants must be given a clear set of rules and a realistic timeline to live and work here. It also means we need to do our best to keep immigrant families and communities together, provide the children of immigrants a fair shot at the American Dream, and foster an inclusive American identity.

We also need to vigorously enforce employment and civil rights laws to ensure businesses are not exploiting immigrant labor and undermining U.S. workers through a shadow economy with low wages and no workplace protections. And we need to increase opportunities for students and foreign workers in key industries to make a permanent home in America and contribute all they have to offer our economy.

Define the Opposition

Too many opportunistic politicians argue for unrealistic deportation policies that separate husbands from their wives and children from their parents. Aggressively harassing and exploiting immigrants, threatening their families, and blocking the children of immigrants from a fair chance in life is no way to solve our immigration problem. We are and ought to be a nation that extends a hand to those who want to work hard, uphold American values, and play by the rules.

ENVIRONMENTAL, CLIMATE AND ENERGY POLICY

Define the Vision

We are stewards of our natural resources and our environmental, climate and energy policies must reflect this responsibility. The well-being of our communities, the future success of our economy and the health of our planet require us to move beyond dirty and non-renewable energy sources to cleaner and more sustainable forms of energy. We cannot mine and drill the planet indefinitely. We must protect our natural systems and use our resources in smarter ways.

Define the Problem

Right now, our priorities are inverted. We subsidize and encourage the use of the dirtiest fossil fuels while failing to invest adequately in and support the use of cleaner energy. We encourage the perpetuation of technologies that waste natural resources, degrade landscapes and deplete the ecosystem—all of which are essential to our survival. Consequently, our air, lands and waterways are getting more polluted; the globe is heating up dangerously; and our economy remains vulnerable to energy price shocks while big oil companies report record profits.

Climate change is a complex process, but we know the average temperature of the Earth has risen over the past few decades at the fastest pace in recorded history. If this global warming continues unabated, we can expect to face global food and water shortages and natural disasters on a catastrophic scale as soon as in the next few decades.

Define the Solution

To address both global climate change and America's energy woes, we need substantial public and private investment in clean-energy sources and production technologies; more efficient transportation, workplaces, food production and housing; and incentives for consumers and businesses to switch from dirtier to cleaner energy sources, such as a carbon pollution fee for burning fossil fuels. We also must stop subsidizing the extraction and use of fossil fuels and end the stranglehold of big oil companies on Washington.³

A substantial share of the money collected from a carbon fee should be directed to the research and development of new energy sources and infrastructure and to cushioning the impact of a carbon fee on the budgets of people of lesser means. Part of the revenue also could be used for deficit reduction and other critical priorities such as health care and national infrastructure renewal.

Define the Opposition

Anyone who tells you America can continue to burn as much oil and gas as it wants without harming our communities, our economy and our planet is uninformed. Our current path is unsustainable and harmful to our health and well-being. The sooner we change course, the better off we all will be.



REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND HEALTH

Define the Vision

Women must be guaranteed full and equal rights to control their own bodies and make decisions about their own lives. All women should have access to necessary care for reproductive health, and individual women and their doctors alone—not politicians or conservative interest groups—should make decisions about pregnancy, contraception and abortion.

Define the Problem

The United States was once at the forefront of advancing equal rights for women, including rights related to reproductive and sexual health. But conservative groups and the politicians they support are determined to roll back decades of reproductive freedoms and health access for millions of American women. From restrictions on abortion and mandatory ultrasounds to attacks on birth control and family planning, conservatives believe it is their business to determine how women should lead their lives and treat their bodies.

In 2011 alone, states enacted more than 90 abortion restrictions—the most on record—while Congress sought to eliminate funding for family-planning services and allow companies and specific groups to deny women access to contraception.

Define the Solution

Our government has an obligation to establish conditions that ensure women are free from coercion and able to make important decisions for themselves about family, sexuality and reproduction. This includes enforcing and strengthening legal rights to all decisions about when and if to have children. It also means government should do more to support the full range of women's reproductive health needs, including contraception, abortion care, pre- and postnatal care and delivery options.

Particular attention should be paid to low-income women and women of color who are most affected by restrictions of reproductive freedoms and access to health care.

Define the Opposition

Progressives believe women must be respected as full and equal moral agents, free from outside interference and in full control of their own lives and bodies. In contrast, many conservatives believe women have few if any intrinsic rights to determine their lives and decisions

about childbearing, family planning and reproductive health. This attack on women's reproductive health care violates fundamental American values of self-determination, freedom and equality.

MONEY IN POLITICS

Define the Vision

The battle for democracy is at the heart of our history. Our nation was founded, in the Declaration of Independence, on the creed that “all men are created equal.” For two centuries we have driven toward this vision of political equality. It’s never been easy. We cherish a political system rooted in one-person-one-vote. But we also want the benefits of a robust private economy, with inevitable concentrations of wealth. American democracy can only thrive if government is accountable to ordinary citizens, reflecting their voices and values, and curbing the excess power of wealthy private interests.

Define the Problem

Today, big money threatens to undermine American democracy. *Citizens United* and other court rulings obliterated a century of campaign finance laws. Now a handful of big corporations and wealthy individuals dominate political funding, often through purportedly independent “SuperPACs.” Hundreds of millions of dollars are laundered secretly through such shadowy nonprofits. This lack of control creates an environment ripe for flagrant corruption and will only worsen the paralysis of a dysfunctional Congress. Even judicial elections are increasingly under assault from secretive special interest funders in states across the country. Not surprisingly, public trust in government has plummeted, falling to its lowest levels in decades. We risk a new Gilded Age where public policy is fully dominated by private economic power. Progressives must put democracy reform at the center of our strategy going forward. If we don’t fix the systems of democracy, we can’t solve our nation’s problems.

Define the Solution

Bold new reforms can build on hopeful trends of recent years. The small-donor revolution most evident in the 2008 Obama campaign was real, if incomplete. Social media have begun to transform campaigning while lessening costs. These observations support the pursuit of at least two key reforms that will enhance citizen participation in the political process. First, a new system of small donor public financing for federal elections would provide multiple matching funds for small gifts. It would give ordinary citizens a far louder voice in presidential and congressional elections. The second key pro-participation reform, Voter Registration Modernization,⁴ would use digital technology to register all eligible citizens, automatically and permanently. This would enfranchise tens of millions while curbing any risk of fraud, thereby ending the partisan voting wars.

At the same time, we need a new legal context for money in politics: a long-term drive to overturn *Citizens United* so that the Constitution is once again read as a charter for a self-governing democracy.

Define the Opposition

Whenever conservatives have gotten so much as a toe-hold on a lever of power—whether in state capitols or the Supreme Court—they swiftly move to curb democracy. At one level, this is nothing new: politicians have long tried to manipulate the rules to benefit themselves and their sponsors. More fundamentally, this drive to undercut democracy is unseemly, runs counter to our core national values, and will—if unchecked—be utterly destructive to the future of the country.

GAY RIGHTS AND MARRIAGE EQUALITY

Define the Vision

We want a society in which all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, have the same chance to pursue health and happiness, earn a living, provide for themselves and their families, feel and be safe in their communities, serve their country and take care of the ones they love.

Define the Problem

Gay and transgender people and their families, simply because of who they are or whom they love, face legal and societal hurdles that other Americans do not face. In a majority of states, employers can legally fire gay and transgender employees for reasons that have nothing to do with performance. Landlords can legally deny housing to gay and transgender people. Loving, committed same-sex couples are denied that most basic chance at happiness —being able to marry the person they love and make a lifelong promise to care for and be responsible for each other. Too many children are still denied health care and the security of strong legal ties to the parents who are raising them, just because those parents are gay or lesbian. And gay and transgender students continue to face bullying and harassment in schools.

Define the Solution

A just society does not discriminate against people because of who they are or love. Our laws and our public institutions should treat everyone fairly and equally, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Define the Opposition

Intolerance, rejection, unfairness and exclusion tear at the fabric of who we are as a nation, and any effort to deny gay and transgender Americans and their families a fair shot in life, regardless of the motivation, runs counter to our core American values. We are committed to the deeply rooted American ideal of fair and equal treatment for everyone, the right of all people to pursue health and happiness, and the chance for every person—straight, gay and transgender alike—to live with dignity and freedom.

SUMMARY COMMENTS: THE LONG VIEW

For too long, conservatives in America have laid claim to the moral high ground—as if simply stating it loudly and repeatedly would make it so, even while conservative policies have actively undermined the interests of American families and ruptured our economy.

In reality, no group has done more to elevate individual achievement and advance the quality of life for the average American family—in all its forms—than progressives. Freedom, independence, personal responsibility, fairness, loyalty, cooperation, faith, security, accountability, bipartisanship, family, community, patriotism, and opportunity for all are fundamentally progressive values. Progressives prize liberty and celebrate individual achievement—alongside community action, public investment and the vital role of government.

Progressives also recognize that our true greatness as a nation is based almost entirely on the concern we have historically demonstrated for others, as a country and as private citizens. Progressives care about others and the conditions of our world and accept the responsibility to act on that care. Whether leading the nation out of the Great Depression and helping to win World War II—or championing civil rights and ensuring all Americans have access to affordable health care—progressives have always believed the true strength of these United States lies in our commitment to doing right by all people.

Therefore, the underlying assertion of this document is that progressive thinking is a positive, moral force in American life, grounded in values that are core to our nation’s character and evolving directly from the founding documents on which we’ve built this country. For generations, progressive thinking has driven citizen action and legislative measures that have helped transform the quality of life in our country and made the U.S. a model of human and individual rights, freedoms and opportunities. It is time progressives begin to assert their position clearly and in unflinching terms because progressive thinking is essential to the health and future of this country. We have produced this document in the belief that a better and more synthesized understanding of progressive thinking will lead to greater success in driving changes that improve the lives of all Americans.

This writing began with an outline of the progressive political story, complete with heroes, adversaries, a challenging quest, and a path forward. A direct, accessible and clear-cut story is needed to appeal to

the hearts and minds of countless Americans who share progressive values and beliefs but don't yet realize it. This progressive story is then given substance by the examples shared here of progressive thinking in action—a trio of inspirational speeches from great progressive leaders, followed by a list of some of the many ways in which progressive thinking has transformed American lives for the better.

Next, we focused on the core elements of a progressive worldview—our common values, beliefs, and approach to key contemporary issues—as a framework within which individual candidates, organizers, and others can construct their own heartfelt progressive view of our world.

Now that you have reached conclusion, we encourage you to review the Appendices, which provide further context for the American progressive story. While supplemental to the primary focus of *Progressive Thinking*, these pieces are valuable reading for those who want to understand more fully and identify with progressivism.

Progressives have a proud history—one reflected in various ways throughout this document, including the list of progressive accomplishments over the last 100 years. We ought to talk about those accomplishments and what they mean to our country whenever we have the chance.

Thanks to progressives, today's soldiers returning from the Middle East have GI Bill benefits. Thanks to progressives, even children living in the most desperate poverty and from the most unstable family settings can wake up in the morning and go to public schools. By fighting for the 40-hour workweek, progressives created what we now know as the weekend. By regulating industry, progressives gave us confidence the food we buy at the grocery store is clean and safe. Progressives marched in the streets and suffered in prison so women and people of color could have the right to vote. Progressives financed the railroads that tied far-flung states together into a strong and unified nation. Progressives made our scientific infrastructure the finest in the world, supporting breathtaking advances in our understanding of human health, technology and our world. Progressives have fought for the rights of farmers and farm workers, of children and people with disabilities, of families and working Americans. This is what the moral high ground in America really looks like—and just imagine what our future could be with a new generation of progressive thinkers to combat the challenges facing us today.

Progressives throughout American history have been Democrat, Republican and independent. They have come from the ranks of rich and poor, old and young, and from all races and religious faiths. They understand

and respect the necessity of government and defend an accountable, efficient and well-run government as essential to the preservation of individual liberties, justice and quality of life. They are those who speak up for and uphold the rights of the little guy in the face of overwhelming power and self-interest. They have defended the rights of the average American and given voice to those too marginalized to speak for themselves. They are the champions of fairness, freedom, opportunity, and cooperation, who cherish an abiding appreciation for the wisdom of our nation’s founders and the vision they laid out for a prosperous and equitable society—a vision in which “everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does his or her fair share, and everyone plays by the same rules.”

It is in that spirit this document has been provided. Progressives have a powerful and inspirational story to tell, and all of us who connect with this story have a role in telling it.



APPENDIX A: THE PROGRESSIVE NATURE OF THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

The Constitution created the basic rules for governing the country. It provides the legal structure for protecting individual rights and promoting the national interest. The preamble to the Constitution sets out a clear mission for national action that conservatives often deny: “We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, 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 of America.”

For progressives, the Constitution provides clear limits on what government can do in relation to personal freedom, but it also empowers the government to do what is necessary to advance our common interests. Article 1, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution explicitly grants the government the authority to collect taxes, pay debts, promote the general welfare and common defense, regulate commerce and maintain our defenses. It also grants Congress the power to make all laws necessary and proper to carrying out the powers of the Constitution and the government at large.

The Constitution established a set of principles and structures to help Americans improve their nation and build a more just society over time. It was designed to evolve with the changing needs of society. In Thomas Jefferson’s famous formulation, “[L]aws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind.” The original Constitution replaced the Articles of Confederation, which failed to address the nation’s mounting problems after the Revolutionary War. The Constitution itself was improved by the addition of the Bill of Rights, which guaranteed our rights to free speech, assembly and religion and protected us from unwarranted intrusion by government.

After the Civil War, the Constitution was amended to end slavery, ensure due process for all, and grant African-Americans the right to vote and full citizenship. In the 20th century, our Constitution was again updated to establish the income tax, provide for the direct election of Senators and expand voting rights for women, minorities and young people.

Each of these amendments helped to create a stronger nation and greater freedom.

Over time, and through the contributions of generations of Americans, the Constitution has created a framework for self-governing that has

allowed our nation to put in place important social and economic protections for workers, the poor, the elderly, and those who face discrimination. It enabled key programs like Social Security and Medicare to be created, guarantees the right to unionize, and justifies reproductive freedom for women. The Constitution is a blueprint for protecting individual freedom and advancing our common interests and national priorities.

APPENDIX B: FAITH TRADITIONS AND PROGRESSIVISM

Historically, there have been two primary strands of progressive thought concerning the proper relationship between faith and politics. One, associated with Enlightenment liberalism, is secular, skeptical about particular religious claims in a pluralistic society, and insistent on keeping religion out of politics and politics out of religion. Prominent American liberals like Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, among others, strongly advocated freedom of conscience, religious tolerance, and strict separation of church and state as represented in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Classical liberalism placed a premium on rationality, self-determination and personal morality above faith, church authority and public morality and looked to establish a constitutional order in America that would prevent the merging of religion and government prevalent in Europe. In turn, many religious authorities, most notably the Catholic Church, viewed liberalism as a “sin” and worked hard to stop its spread in Europe and America before making amends with the tradition.⁵ The liberal conception of faith and politics, represented best by the religious freedom and disestablishment clauses of the First Amendment, eventually triumphed in this country as most Americans came to accept that people could freely practice their faith while keeping specific religious beliefs from taking over government and threatening the religious freedom of others.

A second and equally powerful strand of progressive thought emerges directly from religious values and social teachings. This is the tradition of the Social Gospel movement, Walter Rauschenbusch, William Jennings Bryan, Jane Addams, Fr. John Ryan, Dorothy Day, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and others. Many of the most prominent social movements in American progressive history— including the Civil Rights movement, which was spearheaded by religious leaders and institutions—would not have been possible without the inspirational values and moral authority of socially-conscious Christianity and Judaism. Progressives working within these faith traditions and others applied religious morality to the task of transforming American society during the industrial age away from the exploitation of workers and toward more cooperative forms of economic life. Throughout American history, these faith-driven progressives insisted that society and governments uphold the fundamental notion that all people are equal in God’s eyes and deserve basic dignity, freedom, political rights and economic opportunities in life. Religious progressives promoted the notion of community and solidarity above concepts of individualism and materialism and worked to stop unnecessary wars and military aggression across the globe.

The Social Gospel movement and Catholic social teaching played influential roles (along with the social justice tradition of Judaism and smaller faith traditions) in the progressive search for economic fairness and equality in the 20th century. Both traditions promoted the belief that any true commitment to the Gospels and the example of Jesus Christ demanded followers to take concrete steps to address oppression and hardship in this world and to replace the anti-government attitudes of the late 19th century with a more communitarian outlook. In his famous book, *Progress and Poverty*, Henry George, a popular economist and social gospel adherent, rejected the traditional notion of religion that allowed the “rich Christian to bend on Sundays in a nicely upholstered pew...without any feeling of responsibility for the squalid misery that is festering but a square away.”

Walter Rauschenbusch’s classic 1907 book, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, served as the most complete statement of faith-based progressivism and offered a compelling argument for the social application of the Gospels. Rauschenbusch stressed how “the essential purpose of Christianity was to transform human society into the kingdom of God by regenerating all human relations and reconstituting them in accordance with the will of God.” The purpose of this argument was to show people how Christian teachings and the prophetic tradition of the Hebrew Bible could be put to use to foment social change during a period of want and suffering: “If anyone holds that religion is essentially ritual and sacramental; or that it is purely personal; or that God is on the side of the rich; or that social interest is likely to lead preachers astray; he must prove his case with his eye on the Hebrew prophets, and the burden of proof is with him.”⁶

Rauschenbusch took on what he called “the present crisis” wrought by the industrial revolution and the rise of modern capitalism, arguing that Christian civilization could no longer withstand the injustices of contemporary times—inequality, poverty, physical deprivation and hunger, worker abuses. His solution was that desperate times required genuine moral leadership. To accomplish the humanizing of capitalism, he encouraged more direct action such as the settlement houses, he supported the organizing and solidarity of the labor movement, and he promoted the Christian volunteerism of preachers and groups like the YMCA and the Salvation Army. Above all, Rauschenbusch counseled people to put their theological principles to work personally by adding “spiritual power along the existing and natural relations of men to direct them to truer ends and govern them by higher motives.”

On the Catholic side, Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, served as the intellectual and theological basis for a new generation of

social activism for American Catholics. The Pope's statement on capital and labor sought to find a humane path for capitalism that respected workers and avoided the extremes of both socialism and laissez-faire conservatism. *Rerum Novarum* affirmed the right of state intervention on behalf of citizens, endorsed unionization, and also affirmed property rights. Its teachings provided a moral and theological basis for generations of Catholic social justice reform most famously seen in Monsignor John Ryan's "Bishop's Program of Social Reconstruction" in 1919 and later actions during the New Deal.⁷

Progressives today come in many stripes, and non-believers and believers alike have managed to find common ground on key areas from climate change and poverty to war and social policy. (*Adapted from the Progressive Tradition Series, CAP*)



APPENDIX C: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND PROGRESSIVISM

As a reform tradition, progressivism has always focused its moral energy against societal injustice, corruption and inequality. From the rise of labor and the struggle for women’s suffrage to the civil rights, environmental, anti-war and gay rights movements, progressivism has been built on a vibrant grassroots foundation. The activists and leaders of these movements believed deeply in the empowerment and equality of the less privileged in society, the primacy of democracy in American life, and the notion that government should safeguard the common good from unchecked individual and commercial greed. They challenged government to eliminate its own legal injustices and also harnessed the force of government as a vital tool for advancing human freedom and establishing the “more perfect Union” envisioned by the Founders.

Central to all progressive social movements is the belief that the people do not have to wait for change from the top down—that people themselves can be catalysts for change from the bottom up. Many social-movement activists came from middle- or working-class backgrounds and possessed the courage and skill to organize others, risking great personal sacrifice and danger. Non-violent themselves, many of these activists faced ridicule, violence and other hardships in their efforts to push their fellow citizens toward more enlightened positions in line with the country’s stated values. Often ignored by mainstream political parties, social-movement activists engaged in public education and took to the streets to demand justice and political equality. Through direct-action campaigns and political organizing, they asked other Americans to join their cause as a matter of conscience and duty to their fellow human beings. As Martin Luther King, Jr. famously stated in his *Letter from Birmingham Jail*: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial ‘outside agitator’ idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.”⁸

The relationship between political progressivism—as expressed in the platforms and actions of political parties and leaders—and social movements has not always been harmonious or cooperative. Social movements, by definition, arise from a committed minority of citizens working together to shape larger public consciousness about particular injustices, in addition to working for concrete political change. Social movements have invariably advanced moral and political causes surrounding gender, racial and class

equality with much greater force and consistency than those in mainstream politics. Often, the ideas of social movements, such as expanded suffrage and civil rights protections, become uncontested parts of mainstream politics only after prolonged struggles. In other cases, social movements band together to create new political institutions to challenge the partisan status quo from the outside, as seen with the early farmers' alliances that formed the People's Party and social reformers and dissident Republicans of the early 1900s who formed the Progressive Party.

Progressive leaders themselves have learned from the principled activism of social movements. Many mainstream progressive political leaders in the past were reactionary on issues of race and gender. At the same time, the seeds of the great civil rights triumphs of the 20th century came from within progressivism itself. A bi-racial coalition of progressives joined together to create the NAACP and many leading progressives emerged from the fight for abolition and women's suffrage. Eventually, the collective efforts of these movements helped to turn progressivism itself into a stronger vehicle for human equality, social tolerance and political rights for all people.

Progressive social movements can be divided into two main categories: (1) *movements for equality and individual rights*, and (2) *movements for economic justice*. What, if anything, ties these movements together, and how do they fit within the larger intellectual and political tradition of progressivism?

First, each of the movements developed in response to a grave injustice in American life that directly or indirectly affected a significant segment of society, for example, the formal inequality of women, African-Americans, immigrants, and gays and lesbians led to various movements for civil rights; the poor working conditions and poverty-level subsistence of wage earners led to the rise of the labor movement.

Second, each of these social movements worked as independent checks on mainstream progressive politics and functioned as internal factions within the progressive tradition itself.

Third, in terms of shared values, many of these movements were grounded in the moral and philosophical inspiration of the early American tradition—particularly the Declaration of Independence, the preamble to the U.S. Constitution and other civic republican and democratic ideals—as well as longstanding religious principles expressed in Protestant, Catholic and Jewish faiths.

Fourth, each of these movements in one way or another advanced the values of progressivism: freedom in its fullest sense; a commitment to the common good; pragmatic reform; human equality; and cooperation and interdependence. Although sometimes radical for their times, the movements described here lie clearly within the reform tradition of American politics and many, if not all, of their original goals have been integrated into the mainstream of American society and government over time.

Ultimately, the relationship between social movements and progressivism is one of shared learning and activism in pursuit of common values. *(Adapted from the Progressive Tradition Series, CAP)*

APPENDIX D: PROGRESSIVE BELIEFS ABOUT THE ECONOMY: AN ELABORATION

To understand progressive beliefs about the economy in the 21st century, some brief historical context is necessary. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, two dominant ideas framed American discussions about how to organize the economy. At one extreme was a strictly “hands-off” approach favored by many conservatives, who argued for minimal state involvement in the economy and few social protections or governmental measures to address economic inequality. The other extreme, favored by many socialists, was a primarily “state-controlled” approach of extensive planning of the economy, reduced private activity, and public ownership of the major means of production.

Progressives in this country rejected both of these extremes and instead created a distinctly American economic model that combined private economic freedom and a market economy with investments and safeguards to ensure freedom and opportunity for all: regulation of markets; collective bargaining for workers to ensure fair rewards for their labor; workplace and environmental protections; and public investments in education, health care and infrastructure.

The progressive approach to the economy sought to build the foundations of national prosperity and harness the best aspects of markets while guarding against their excesses. This included steps during the Progressive Era and New Deal to rein in excessive speculation and volatility in the economy through the regulation of banking and stock exchanges and establishment of fire walls between commercial banks (those that accept deposits and hold people’s savings) and investment banks (those that engage in the more speculative practice of underwriting and selling securities).

Businesses have little incentive, and are not expected, to invest in key public goods that advance the economic interests of all Americans: schools, roads and bridges, public transportation, research and development, employment protections, national security and public safety measures. Government takes the lead role in providing these things, all of which are fundamental to a modern economy and rising national prosperity.

Markets do many things well but they do not account for the full range of human values, nor do they produce all of the goods necessary for a fully functioning society. They also demonstrate a distinctly cyclical pattern and generate disruptive downturns. Thus, progressives believe government must share in the investment in vital public needs to help

promote individual achievement and create jobs and growth, while also protecting the public interest by doing what is necessary to correct the failures and limitations of markets.

Cooperation among citizens, between government and private enterprise, and with U.S. global partners is the basis for success in the pursuit of key goals: sustainability for our economy, smart use of natural resources, success in combating pollution and global warming, and strong protections and rights for workers and local communities. In contrast, you're-on-your-own economics argues that markets are essentially self-correcting, so solutions put forth to address market shortcomings and social inequalities are counterproductive and threatening to economic freedom and private-sector growth. For conservatives, poverty is the inevitable result of differences in personal ability within a market economy, and there is little that can or should be done to correct it.

Progressives believe individual economic success is related to the economic success of others—that we all do better when we all do better. For progressives, a large middle class is the engine of the economy. When many people are left out of sharing prosperity, as is inevitable in the “you're-on-your-own” model, the entire economy is less prosperous. For progressives, the true measures of our economic success are the well-being of our families and the morale and productivity of our nation, not just the state of the stock market or robust corporate profits.

Given conservative perspectives, it is not surprising that progressives devised nearly all of the laws and institutions necessary to correct the shortcomings of the market and encourage opportunity, while conservatives have traditionally opposed these measures.⁹ In practice, progressive economics has worked much better for more people than conservative economics. After World War II, progressive beliefs and policies paved the way for America to become one of the most powerful economies in the world and helped create the largest and most secure middle class of any nation in human history. Progressives proved that private initiative, effective government and cooperative economic behavior are all compatible and necessary components for generating national wealth and increased individual opportunity. Progressives created a foundation for national success financed by a tax system that recognized that those who benefited most from the investments that created the modern economy had a responsibility to pay back into the system so future generations could thrive as well.

Unfortunately, as we have seen over the last several decades, this proven American economic model is under severe strain from deficit spending,

poor market regulation leading to the financial crises, housing speculation gone awry, and more. Conservatives continually work to abolish the social and economic policies that progressives devised to fuel American progress and protect economically vulnerable populations. Private and public unions, for example, face attacks unseen since the creation of collective bargaining rights decades ago—attacks that signal an increasing disregard for the rights, needs and well-being of the average American worker.

As a result, our economy is not working as well as it could or should. We are not creating new and successful companies as rapidly as in decades past. The good jobs and wages necessary for strong families are disappearing. The great American middle class is in danger. The ranks of the poor—particularly the working poor—are growing. America needs to make and export more goods with our own well-educated and well-trained workers. We need to be planting the seeds of innovation by investing in our proven engines of opportunity—modern infrastructure and high-quality, accessible education systems to fuel our growth and competitiveness. We need to reward and encourage companies that hire American workers and care for the communities in which they are located.

In short, we need an economy that works for everyone, not just the few.

APPENDIX E: HOW INEQUALITY HARMS OUR ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

Even before Occupy Wall Street hit the headlines, it was widely acknowledged that something has gone drastically wrong with the American economic system and how it treats the middle class and working poor. In the wake of the movement's impact, rising divisions based on income and wealth have become a prime subject of media coverage and everyday conversation. It's about time.

To understand what has gone wrong, first understand what once went right. In the postwar era until 1973, the growth in living standards for the typical family was extraordinary: a 2.8 percent per year increase in median family income over the 1947-73 period, which more than doubled incomes. It was this growth, energized by robust private-sector enterprises and assisted by the rise in union membership in both the public and private sectors that created the first mass middle class in history and defined America as a middle-class nation. But since 1973, growth in median family income has averaged just 0.6 percent per year—an equally extraordinary slowdown.¹⁰ This downward shift can be attributed to many factors, including the challenges of globalization, the shifting patterns and demands of work, changing demographics, decline in private-sector union membership, and state and local budget cuts that have resulted in declines in wages and jobs for public-sector workers including teachers, firefighters, police, social workers, and community health workers.

Moreover, income growth for the affluent and, even more so, the rich, has been far better in recent decades than for the median family. Since 1979, income gains for the top 1 percent have been an extraordinary 277 percent, while gains for the middle 60 percent have been just 38 percent and those for the bottom 20 percent a mere 18 percent.¹¹

Because of this great divergence, income has become increasingly concentrated among the very wealthiest in our society. This peaked in 2007, when the top 1 percent of the income distribution received 23 percent of total income, most of which (19 percent) was received by the top one-half of 1 percent. This is a level of income concentration not seen in the US since the 1920s,¹² just prior to the Great Depression.

Wealth inequality is even worse. Currently, the top 1 percent holds 36 percent of the country's wealth, and the top 10 percent holds 75 percent. The bottom 80 percent holds only 13 percent of that wealth.¹³ Recent

trends have exacerbated wealth inequality: 82 percent of wealth gains since 1982 have gone to the top 5 percent, with half of those gains going to the top 1 percent.¹⁴

How has inequality affected our families?

In light of these trends, it is not surprising that economic mobility in the United States is suffering. The great promise of America, that everyone has the opportunity to get ahead, is eroding. Where once we supported successful policies to reduce poverty, today the ranks of the poor are growing. We are no longer better than other advanced countries in the ability to rise from the bottom; in fact, we are worse than most. And one culprit appears to be our high level of inequality and its social consequences.¹⁵

High inequality is tied, in part, to the slow growth in wages for most Americans. Between 1973 and 2009, real wages rose only 8 percent for the average worker, and for men they did not rise at all.¹⁶ At the same time, the cost of education and health care for middle- and working-class families is increasingly beyond reach.

For households, the net result of all these trends has been more and more debt and greater insecurity. The average total household debt is now 117 percent of annual disposable personal income.¹⁷ Many Americans, unable to earn and save enough, are falling out of the middle class. Lagging incomes and poor regulations on borrowing have left too many Americans saddled with high debts and with no cushion to back them up should a job loss or medical emergency hit.

How did we go from a country that was growing together to one that is growing apart?

The list of causes is long and includes globalization, technological change, declining unions, low minimum wages, deregulation, demographic changes and family structure, and reduced public investments in the common good. Adding to this list is *laissez-faire*, you're-on-your-own economics, which posits that fairness should not be a social goal and that opportunity applies first and foremost to the opportunity businesses have to pursue profits.¹⁸ Such opportunity is provided by the unregulated market; the job of government, in the *laissez-faire* view, is to get out of the way. Everyone, conservatives have argued, will be better off if government just lets businesses operate without regulations, taxes or the public investments on which commerce depends.

So, over the past few decades, we as a nation have done what conservatives asked. We responded to the challenges of globalization and

technological change by weakening government and gutting labor market institutions like unions and minimum wage laws. And we cut the “public” investments—investments in education, infrastructure and research—that are required for a smooth, efficient and profitable economic system that functions for growth and the common good. Overall public investment by the federal government as a percent of GDP slipped from 2.6 percent per year at the end of the 1946-1973-era to 1.9 per year in the '00s. And core infrastructure (transportation, energy, water management) investment slowed dramatically, from a 4.3 percent per year average growth rate in the 1950-74 period to just 2.3 percent per year in the 1975-2007 period.¹⁹

Reflecting this neglect of infrastructure, the American Society of Civil Engineers has estimated that a five-year investment of \$2.2 trillion would be needed simply to repair existing infrastructure in the U.S., independent of any investments that might be needed for expansion and innovation.

How would progressive values reverse these trends?

As summarized above, the country and our economy have declined in many important ways. You're-on-your-own, laissez-faire economics and supply-side tax cuts for the wealthy have not delivered in terms of overall economic performance like economic growth and unemployment. Instead, real GDP growth actually slowed down: 2.8 percent per year in the post-1973 period, compared to 3.8 percent per year in the postwar 1946-73 era when progressive economics ruled. And despite encouraging the free market's allegedly natural tendency toward full employment, the conservative regime has produced higher average unemployment rates (6.1 percent) than those in the 1946-1973 era (4.8 percent).²⁰

The exclamation point on the failure of laissez-faire economics has been provided by the financial crisis and Great Recession of 2007-2009, whose effects still cripple the U.S. economy today. Indeed, conservative economics not only failed to anticipate these events, it facilitated the crisis by blanket deregulation of the financial sector under the assumption that the sector would self-regulate.²¹

This is what happens when core progressive values get taken out of the economy. But conservatives, far from being daunted by this sorry record, are doubling down on their commitment to the unregulated market and trickle-down economics. They are seeking to preserve and extend tax cuts for the wealthy, while simultaneously proposing to cut social programs to the bone, repeal health care reform, turn Medicare into an underfunded voucher and starve public investment. They are relentlessly pursuing this agenda aided and abetted by the flood of money in politics.

Progressives can and should counter by firmly rejecting trickle-down, you're-on-your-own economic policies and elevating the following arguments as the bases of national economic policy:

- Markets fail, and when they do, middle- and lower-income families face the brunt of the downturn. Thus, we need strong regulatory oversight, particularly of financial markets, and strong countercyclical policies to temporarily offset the economic destruction of large market failures like the Great Recession.
- Even in good times, there are many economically vulnerable families that struggle, and they need a decent safety net to sustain them and educational opportunities to help enhance their upward mobility and enable them to realize their potential.
- A strong, productive private sector cannot exist absent investments in the critical public goods upon which businesses depend, including transportation infrastructure, an amply educated workforce, and support of innovative R&D that private firms cannot be expected to undertake on their own.
- The last few decades have clearly shown that full employment—an essential ingredient to broadly shared growth and a strong middle class—has been the exception rather than the rule. Establishing full-employment conditions in the labor market is thus a key component of economic growth and broadened national prosperity.
- All of these functions imply a government sector that is sustained by progressive taxation and efficiently run to meet the challenges of a contemporary, global economy.

Such a policy framework will strengthen private enterprise and individual achievement through public investment; elevate values of fairness, opportunity, cooperation, and advancement of the common good; and create greater income and wealth as the basis for an expanding middle class.

APPENDIX F: PROGRESSIVE VALUES AND BELIEFS IN ACTION: FDR'S FOUR FREEDOMS AND ECONOMIC BILL OF RIGHTS

FDR on the 'Four Freedoms':

"In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.

The first is freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world.

The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world.

The third is freedom from want—which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants—everywhere in the world.

The fourth is freedom from fear—which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor—anywhere in the world.

That is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation. That kind of world is the very antithesis of the so-called new order of tyranny which the dictators seek to create with the crash of a bomb.

To that new order we oppose the greater conception—the moral order. A good society is able to face schemes of world domination and foreign revolutions alike without fear.

Since the beginning of our American history, we have been engaged in change—in a perpetual peaceful revolution—a revolution which goes on steadily, quietly adjusting itself to changing conditions—without the concentration camp or the quick-lime in the ditch. The world order which we seek is the cooperation of free countries, working together in a friendly, civilized society.

This nation has placed its destiny in the hands and heads and hearts of its millions of free men and women; and its faith in freedom under the guidance of God. Freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere. Our support goes to those who struggle to gain those rights or keep them. Our strength is our unity of purpose.

To that high concept there can be no end save victory."

—*State of the Union Address, 1941*

FDR on the Economic Bill of Rights:

"It is our duty now to begin to lay the plans and determine the strategy for the winning of a lasting peace and the establishment of an American standard of living higher than ever before known. We cannot be content, no matter how high that general standard of living may be, if some fraction of our people—whether it be one-third or one-fifth or one-tenth—is ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed, and insecure.

This Republic had its beginning, and grew to its present strength, under the protection of certain inalienable political rights—among them the right of free speech, free press, free worship, trial by jury, freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures. They were our rights to life and liberty.

As our nation has grown in size and stature, however—as our industrial economy expanded—these political rights proved inadequate to assure us equality in the pursuit of happiness.

We have come to a clear realization of the fact that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. 'Necessitous men are not free men.' People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made.

In our day these economic truths have become accepted as self-evident. We have accepted, so to speak, a second Bill of Rights under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all—regardless of station, race, or creed.

Among these are:

The right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries or shops or farms or mines of the nation;

The right to earn enough to provide adequate food and clothing and recreation;

The right of every farmer to raise and sell his products at a return which will give him and his family a decent living;

The right of every businessman, large and small, to trade in an atmosphere of freedom from unfair competition and domination by monopolies at home or abroad;

The right of every family to a decent home;

The right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health;

The right to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment;

The right to a good education.

All of these rights spell security. And after this war is won we must be prepared to move forward, in the implementation of these rights, to new goals of human happiness and well-being.

America's own rightful place in the world depends in large part upon how fully these and similar rights have been carried into practice for all our citizens.

For unless there is security here at home there cannot be lasting peace in the world."

Address to Congress, January 11, 1944.

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