

# TOWARD AN ECONOMIC JUSTICE AGENDA

For decades, corporate America has waged class war—against working people, the poor, minorities, the very young and the very old, and even many in the middle classes—through a conscious government policy of redistributing income, wealth and power upward.

Living standards and union membership have eroded, and wages are in a race to the bottom thanks to so-called “free trade,” while corporate profits and CEO salaries balloon obscenely. Environmental degradation continues, our schools are in crisis, and our infrastructure crumbles, while the U.S. spends more on its armed forces than does the rest of the world combined. Devaluing the public sector and deregulation have led to disasters such as the devastation in Katrina’s wake, the maltreatment of injured veterans, and the foreclosure and banking crises.

The American public is fed up. The time has come for this country’s progressive movements to join forces to demand a just economic policy from the federal government. We must oppose not only Republican conservatism and its neo-conservative enablers, but Democratic neoliberalism, too. It is time for an activist agenda that goes beyond defense of the status quo, or agitation for our own discrete issues, and speaks for an inclusive common good. Almost everyone benefits from affordable housing, inexpensive quality health care, excellent education from pre-school through graduation, an equitable tax structure, good jobs with union protection and an America less interested in empire and domination than in peace and cooperation.

In that spirit, DSA offers its Economic Justice Agenda to serve as the basis for broad, multi-issue, progressive action—one that can also serve as a unified series of legislative demands.

The Agenda is not an exhaustive blueprint for social and economic justice, nor do we consider it the final word on the subject. It is a work in progress. Its strength lies in identifying the four pillars that we believe can form the basis for a just economic policy and the program for a progressive electoral majority in Congress that can restrain corporate marauding.

Corporate America is multi-issue and international, but the movements for social change for the most part are not. The business class uses electoral politics effectively, and it rallies behind a common “free-market” agenda. It uses racial, ethnic, and language differences as well as citizenship status to divide individuals and movements that should be cooperating in their mutual interest. The rest of us must push back in every political arena with our own shared perspective and a common legislative program. We must build solidarity among diverse move-

ments and people. Only in this way can we reverse the growing inequality that corporate power has instituted over the past three decades, and restore the public’s faith in democratic government based on liberty, equality, justice and solidarity.

## The four pillars of DSA’s Economic Justice Agenda:

■ Restoring progressive taxation to the levels in effect before the Reagan administration, and enacting massive cuts in wasteful defense spending;

■ Ensuring government resumes its appropriate roles through:

◆ Providing single-payer universal health insurance, and expanding public initiatives in childcare, elder care, pension security, as well as primary, secondary and higher education;

◆ Regulating finance and investment (as was done with the Glass-Steagall Act), controlling interest rates (forbidding usury), providing election protection, ending pollution, strengthening oversight of workplace health and safety, guaranteeing net neutrality, breaking up the concentration of media ownership;

◆ Investment in green jobs, clean and sustainable energy, clean water, public transportation infrastructure, publicly financed election campaigns;

■ Enacting the Employee Free Choice Act – which would restore the right of workers to organize unions and to bargain collectively –as part of a broader effort to rebuild a powerful labor movement capable of achieving equity in the labor market

■ Implementing a U.S. foreign and trade policy that promotes global institutions that advance labor, environmental, and human rights, regulate transnational corporations, and allow small farmers worldwide to earn a living in their own homelands.

*This is a short summary of DSA’s Economic Justice Agenda. For the complete text see [www.dsausa.org/pdf/economic\\_justice\\_agenda.pdf](http://www.dsausa.org/pdf/economic_justice_agenda.pdf) and be sure to visit our web site at:*

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