



April 27, 2020

Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House

Kathy Castor, Chair, Select Committee on the Climate Crisis

Peter DeFazio, Chair, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Raúl Grijalva, Chair, Committee on Natural Resources

Eddie Bernice Johnson, Chair, Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Nita Lowey, Chair, Committee on Appropriations

Richard Neal, Chair, Committee on Ways and Means

Frank Pallone, Jr., Chair, Committee on Energy and Commerce

Bobby Scott, Chair, Committee on Education and Labor

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Chairs Castor, DeFazio, Grijalva, Johnson, Lowey, Neal, Pallone, and Scott,

The Sierra Club and our 3.8 million members and supporters appreciate your continued work as congressional leaders to protect workers and communities on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis. The implementation of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act will offer much-needed health protections and economic relief for millions of people. We also strongly support your efforts, via your respective committees, to craft further COVID-19 relief and stimulus packages to support health and economic security for workers and communities who still face unacceptable risks, to safeguard our democracy, and to put millions of unemployed people back to work. Much remains to be done.

The Sierra Club has already conveyed [our priorities for a CARES 2.0 package](#) to bridge outstanding gaps in critical, immediate relief and to equitably protect workers, communities, and our democracy. That includes health and economic protections for communities and workers on the front lines, such as a moratorium on water and utility shutoffs, safety standards and equipment for frontline workers, benefits coverage for immigrants, measures to address racial disparities, and expanded housing and nutrition assistance. We also have called for additional funding to protect the health and safety of voters and poll workers, including expanded registration options, expanded early voting to prevent crowded polling places, and vote-by-mail options. In addition, we have specified strong conditions that should be tied to all industry assistance to ensure effective oversight, high-road labor standards for workers, and business practices that support a transition to a more equitable, clean energy economy. We urge swift action to address these urgent needs.

With over 26 million people filing for unemployment in the past five weeks, we also must pair these immediate relief measures with a big, bold stimulus package so that we are ready to put millions of people back to work in family-sustaining jobs when the economy reopens. There is no shortage of work that needs to be done. We need to hire millions of workers not only to rebuild the economy, but to chart a path to a more equitable economy that better supports the health of our communities and planet. We can tackle the concurrent crises of unemployment, public health, and climate change by creating good jobs to replace lead pipes, build clean and affordable public transit, modernize our grid, build and repair public housing, manufacture essential health and clean energy goods, restore our forests and wetlands, upgrade

stormwater systems, expand wind and solar power, weatherize our buildings, produce electric vehicles, clean up hazardous waste, and strengthen communities' disaster preparedness. While some jobs could not be filled until after the need for social distancing has diminished, we must act now to allocate money and begin administrative preparation so that the jobs are shovel-ready when the pandemic subsides.

This stimulus plan will support working families, reduce air and water pollution that is exacerbating COVID-19 risks, counter systemic inequities that the crisis has magnified, and tackle the climate crisis that is compounding threats to our economy and health. Critically, no funding in a COVID-19 stimulus package should support new fossil fuel infrastructure. In addition, this stimulus package should be paired with increased funding for environmental enforcement to protect public health and our air, water, and climate as we rebuild the economy. Our response to one crisis must not fuel another.

Our stimulus solutions need to match the scale of the problems we face -- hundreds of thousands of lives at risk, millions of lost jobs, and trillions of dollars' worth of long-awaited repairs for ailing infrastructure. The American Society of Civil Engineers estimates that we need over \$2 trillion in investments to get our current infrastructure to a "B" grade. We appreciate the work you have already done to craft the \$770 billion "Moving Forward" framework as part of a big and bold infrastructure investment. The magnitude of the current crises requires us to advance many of the "Moving Forward" proposals while also going beyond that framework to address other critical infrastructure needs that will protect communities while creating jobs for workers that are grappling with the COVID-19 crisis.

The Sierra Club urges you to consider the following pro-worker, pro-health, pro-equity, pro-climate stimulus investments as top-tier priorities that should be included in forthcoming COVID-19 packages.

Cross-cutting Environmental, Labor, and Equity Standards

All infrastructure investments should uphold these core environmental, labor, and equity standards:

- Climate and Environment:
 - Investments in infrastructure should meet a baseline climate and environmental test. To qualify for funding, projects should demonstrate that their use will support reduced greenhouse gases, reduced toxic pollution, and/or increased climate resilience.
 - The materials and parts used should be subject to Buy Clean standards that reduce industrial pollution, climate resilience standards, and energy efficiency standards (as applicable).
 - All construction and related contracts should include requirements to use climate-resilient designs for infrastructure and low-emissions operations.
- Labor:
 - All construction and related contracts should include requirements for Davis Bacon prevailing wages, project labor agreements, a neutrality policy on collective bargaining, and use of registered apprenticeship programs; in addition to preferences for local hire, community-based businesses, and worker cooperatives.
 - The materials and parts used should be subject to Buy America and other domestic content policies to support manufacturing job creation.

- Equity:
 - At least 40 percent of infrastructure spending should be invested in low-income communities, communities of color, and communities facing disproportionate impacts from the COVID-19 crisis and/or climate change.
 - The share of infrastructure funding that goes to the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and all U.S. territories should be at least proportional to the population of these jurisdictions.
 - All construction and related contracts should require community benefit agreements; a mandatory “ban the box” policy to ensure fair employment opportunities for all; hiring preferences for low-income workers, people of color, people with disabilities, and returning citizens; and contracting preferences for businesses led by women and people of color.
 - All jobs created should be accessible to undocumented immigrants and paired with a moratorium on deportations and a path to citizenship for those workers.

Energy

- Support the clean energy industry (Labor Department data show 106,000 clean energy workers lost their jobs in March alone; other projections estimate 500,000 more jobs lost in the coming months) by providing: refundability of existing tax credits (direct pay or 1603 grants) for renewable energy; extensions of the commence construction and safe harbor deadlines by 18 months; and \$41.5 billion over five years to fund extensions of clean energy tax credits for solar, on and offshore wind, storage, electric vehicles, and energy efficiency. This includes passing:
 - The Renewable Energy Extension Act (H.R. 3961/S. 2289) at \$30 billion over five years,
 - Incentives for onshore wind at \$10 billion over five years,
 - Incentives for offshore wind (Incentivizing Offshore Wind Power Act H.R. 4887/S. 1988; Offshore WIND Act H.R. 3473/S. 1957) at \$316 million over five years,
 - The Energy Storage Tax Incentive and Deployment Act (H.R. 2096/S. 1142) at \$310 million over five years,
 - The Home Energy Savings Act (H.R. 4506/S. 2588) at \$916 million over five years, and
 - The Renewable Energy Transferability Act (H.R. 2704).
- Pass and fully fund the National Climate Bank Act (H.R. 5416), including \$30 billion over the first five years. This will offer financial backing to shovel-ready clean energy, energy storage, and transmission projects facing financial uncertainty due to the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis.
- \$17 billion in 2020 for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to support weatherization, energy-related home repairs, prevention of utility shutoffs, and reconnection of homes that have experienced shutoffs.
- Pass and fully fund sections of the LIFT America Act (H.R. 2741) at about \$21.5 billion over 5 years, specifically “Enhancing Electric Infrastructure Resilience, Reliability, and Energy Security” (31101), “21st Century Power Grid” (31201, 31202), “Energy Efficiency Infrastructure” (32101-32102), “Smart Building Acceleration” (32201-32207), “Weatherization Assistance Program” (32301-32303), “Smart Energy and Water Efficiency” (32401, 32402), “Accelerated Adoption of Energy Efficient Engines and Vehicles” (32501, 32502), “Energy Improvement at Public School Facilities” (32601), “Homeowner Managing Energy Savings” (32701-32716), “Low Income Solar” (33101, 33102),

“Clean Distributed Energy Program” (33301-33304), “Department of Energy Office of Indian Energy” (33501), “Smart Communities” (34101-34104), “Clean Cities Coalition Program” (34201), and “Electric Vehicle Infrastructure” (34301-3407).

- Create jobs for wellhead services workers by investing \$60 billion over five years to close over 3 million orphaned and leaking oil and gas wells, relieving a burden that currently falls largely on states. In exchange, states should be required to update closure and bonding obligations.

Transportation

- Increase public transit operational funding by \$50 billion and maintenance funding by \$100 billion over 10 years to ensure timely, data-driven public health responses, to ensure hygiene and safety measures are in place, and to make up for lost revenues from increased telecommuting and decreased travel. While \$25 billion for transit and \$1 billion for passenger rail is a good initial response, estimated COVID-19-related losses to transit agencies alone tally between \$26 and \$38 billion, and Amtrak is also experiencing unprecedented drops in ridership. In addition, the Department of Transportation estimates the transit maintenance backlog to be approximately \$99 billion. The prohibition on using capital funds for operational expenses also should be waived, so that public transit systems are not forced to use capital funding to maintain operations.
- Increase investments to expand and upgrade passenger rail, public transit, and pedestrian and biking infrastructure to increase jobs and expand clean, accessible mobility, including \$29 billion in rail over five years. Congress should create a \$4.5 billion annual fund with 10 years of funding for Complete Streets projects and training for state Departments of Transportation and local agencies to build streets that are safe and economically prosperous.
- Invest in electric vehicles and charging infrastructure that support good jobs, clean air, public health, accessible mobility, and climate resilience, including:
 - \$20 billion over five years for school districts and transit systems to replace 60,000 school and transit buses (about 10% of the national fleet) with domestically manufactured electric vehicles and charging infrastructure (via the Clean Cities, Clean School Buses, and Low and No Emissions Vehicle programs),
 - Extending and expanding the electric vehicle tax credit to boost investment in light, medium, and heavy-duty vehicle electrification (e.g., the Driving America Forward Act, H.R. 2256/S. 1094) -- the equivalent of a \$12.3 billion investment over 10 years,
 - Investing in programs focused on electric vehicle manufacturing, government fleets, and consumer adoption (e.g., the Clean Cars for America proposal, which invests \$454 billion over 10 years to use consumer rebates to replace millions of gas vehicles with electric vehicles, with support for equitable access and domestic manufacturing), and
 - Investing in charging infrastructure that makes electric cars, trucks, and buses more accessible. The Clean Corridors Act (H.R. 2616) should be passed and fully funded at \$300 million per year for 10 years, along with the sections of the LIFT America Act (H.R. 2741) named below. Such infrastructure proposals should include an evaluation of how well programs increase mobility choice for people from disadvantaged communities (in addition to application of the cross-cutting standards above).

- Pass and fully fund the Transit to Trails Act (H.R. 4273) at \$10 million per year for 10 years to award grants to entities that provide transportation connectors from critically underserved urban and rural communities to much-needed public lands and green spaces.

Buildings

- Pass and fully fund the Green New Deal for Public Housing Act (H.R. 5185) -- at \$172 billion over 10 years -- to retrofit all U.S. public housing in support of energy efficiency, electrification, rooftop solar, climate resilience, and a healthier living environment. In addition to creating hundreds of thousands of jobs, this investment would improve living conditions for over 2 million people, and cut over 5 million tons of carbon emissions each year.
- \$61.2 billion in new funding over five years to support retrofits of all Municipal, University, School, and Hospital (MUSH) buildings to support public health, clean and efficient energy, and climate resilience. This includes reauthorizing the Hill-Burton Act at \$2 billion, increasing funding for the Healthy High-Performance Schools grant program, and passing and fully funding the Rebuild America's Schools Act (H.R. 865) and Clean Air, Sharp Minds Act (S. 3364). These building upgrades would create good jobs; improve health standards for hospital patients, health workers, students, and teachers; cut energy costs; reduce pollution; and help tackle climate change.
- \$30 billion for Community Development Block Grants over five years to expand affordable housing, improve living conditions and public health, and support economic development
- \$7 billion in additional funding over five years for the Weatherization Assistance Program to enable retrofits in low-income households that support health, safety, and energy efficiency. In addition, funding should be created for equivalent programs at the state level.
- \$3.2 billion in new funding over five years for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) program to support building weatherization and other energy efficiency, conservation, and renewable energy projects. EECBG funding should prioritize spending in communities that have not yet benefited from past or ongoing energy efficiency programs.

Manufacturing

- Pass the Medical Supply Chain Emergency Act to require President Trump to implement the Defense Production Act to compel domestic manufacturing of urgently-needed masks, ventilators, and personal protective equipment for health workers on the front lines of the crisis.
- \$3 billion over five years for retooling grants under Section 132 of the Energy Independence and Security Act to expand manufacturing of electric vehicles and components. In addition, the Advanced Technology Vehicles Manufacturing program should be expanded and funded at \$20 billion over five years to support the manufacture of medium and heavy-duty electric vehicles.
- Extend and expand funding at \$3 billion over five years for the Advanced Manufacturing Tax Credit under section 48C of the Internal Revenue Code to boost manufacturing of renewable energy, energy storage, and energy efficiency goods.
- Expand federal, state, and local government procurement of domestically manufactured clean energy goods, including electric vehicles for government fleets; components for government-owned public transit and passenger rail; energy efficient construction materials and appliances for

government buildings; and renewable energy, battery storage, and grid modernization components for federal and municipal-owned energy systems.

- Create and capitalize an economic development and industrial bank to provide preferential loans to manufacturers for expanding the production of goods needed for clean energy, clean transportation, efficient buildings, clean water, and resilient infrastructure, and for investing in reductions in greenhouse gas and toxic emissions from industrial production. In addition, a new Office of Industrial Transformation should be established to execute a program of technology development, demonstration, and deployment that supports clean industrial production and workforce development in these and related sectors.

Water

- \$100 billion over five years for Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (SRFs), split evenly between the two SRFs, with at least 20 percent of funding distributed to disadvantaged communities as additional grants (not loans) and at least 20 percent of Clean Water SRF funding set aside for investing in green infrastructure.
- \$45 billion over 10 years for the Reducing Lead in Drinking Water program to replace lead pipes and protect our children and communities from the damaging impacts of toxic lead pollution. All of this funding should be in grants to fund full (not partial) Lead Service Line (LSL) replacement, and to provide Point of Use Filters in all homes and child care centers with LSLs.
- \$6 billion for wastewater infrastructure to prevent sewage overflows, prevent flooding, and stop runoff pollution. All of this funding should be in grants, to be spent over the next 18 months, with a 30 percent carve-out for natural/green infrastructure projects.
- At least \$5 billion in 2020 to fund emergency relief and a nationwide moratorium on shutoffs of water for the duration of the crisis. This includes funding the costs for utilities to restore and maintain water service for homeowners and renters, tied to provisions that prohibit water shutoffs and establish mandatory safe water reconnections (including for households disconnected prior to the crisis), as well as lenient repayment plans, debt forgiveness, and affordable rate structures. In addition, state water control boards should be directed, with assistance from the Office of Emergency Services, to establish emergency drinking water distribution and delivery programs.
- At least \$3 billion in immediate funding for a Low Income Households Drinking Water and Wastewater Assistance Program, modeled after LIHEAP, to help keep struggling households connected to essential water and wastewater service.
- \$1.75 billion per year, including \$750 million in grants, for 10 years for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program.
- Support communities at risk from toxic PFAS contamination through:
 - \$300 million per year for 10 years to the Defense Environmental Restoration account and \$100 million per year for 10 years to the BRAC Closure account,
 - \$50 million per year for 10 years to the Defense Environmental Restoration account to install point-of-entry systems at households located near Department of Defense installations, and
 - Clarifying that PFAS dischargers are subject to limits under the Clean Water Act.

- Five years of annual funding at \$1 billion for the School Drinking Fountain Replacement program, \$225 million for the Sewer Overflow Control Grants program, \$120 million for the Alaska Native Villages and Rural Communities Water Grant program, \$100 million for the U.S.-Mexico Border Water Infrastructure program, and \$60 million for the Small & Disadvantaged Communities program.

Outdoors / Lands

- Pass and fully fund at \$56 billion over 10 years the Environmental Cleanup Infrastructure Act (S. 1669) to fund cleanup of orphan Superfund sites, abandoned coal mines, and defense and former atomic energy sites. This would support job creation, economic development, and reduction in health and environmental hazards, particularly for communities of color, low income communities, and Indigenous communities. Funding for this legislation would supplement (and expand the reach of) the additional funding outlined below for Superfund cleanup and mine reclamation.
- \$20 billion in additional funding over five years for Superfund site cleanup to protect communities from toxic pollution, with funding set aside for workforce training and renewable energy development. This spending will accelerate toxic site cleanup and protect the 53 million people living within three miles of the existing 1,836 Superfund sites. Local impacts of climate change must be included in Superfund site planning and remediation (see the Preparing Superfund for Climate Change Act, S. 2893). In addition, the Brownfields program should receive \$10 billion in additional funding over five years to clean up contaminated sites in support of community-driven economic development, while protecting against community displacement.
- Pass and fully fund the RECLAIM Act (H.R. 2156) and the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Reauthorization Act (H.R. 4248) to spur economic development in hard-hit mining communities by restoring land and water resources impacted by coal mining. The existing backlog of AML needs is estimated at over \$10 billion. Full funding to address this backlog should be provided over 10 years.
- \$10 billion over 10 years to fund the creation of a Stewardship Corps to hire local workers to restore forests, wetlands, and other ecosystems, as outlined in the Climate Stewardship Act (S.2452). In addition, fund the National Park Service's Outdoor Recreation and Legacy Partnership program at \$1 billion over 10 years to support park improvement projects that boost economic competitiveness, job training, and equitable access to the outdoors. Both programs should prioritize projects and hiring in communities facing disproportionate impacts from the COVID-19 crisis or climate change.

Thank you for your consideration, and for your ongoing work to ensure immediate relief and long-term recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. The Sierra Club stands ready to work with Congress to pass forthcoming COVID-19 packages that uphold the above priorities to ensure a just recovery that works for working people, while laying the groundwork for a healthier, more equitable economy.

Sincerely,



Michael Brune
Executive Director
Sierra Club