



Earth Manifesto

One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies

Earth Manifesto proposals by Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
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Professor Jared Diamond made a valuable observation in his insightful book *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. He wrote that we need a paradigm shift in how our leaders think and act. America needs leaders with "the courage to practice long-term thinking and make bold, courageous, anticipatory decisions at a time when problems become perceptible, but before they reach crisis proportions." We should rightly give stronger support to honest and effective leaders who will act accordingly!

We need leaders who are sane, decent, compassionate, responsible and committed to leaving a healthier legacy of a sustainable future for our children and theirs, and theirs, for countless generations to come. We need good leaders who understand human nature and motivations and needs, and who work with this knowledge to achieve greater good goals. Even before the pandemic, humanity has been facing an existential crisis in the world due to a convergence of serious challenges that include the inexorable exhaustion of natural resources, the encroaching condition of a diminishing carrying capacity of the Earth to provide for a human population approaching 8 billion persons, millions of species of life being threatened with eternal extinction, the global climate being dangerously destabilized, and other adversities being caused by ecological overshoot by our needy and greedy kind.

When good sense prevails, moderate leaders pass fair-minded reforms, but when rashly uncompromising courses are pursued, bitter discord can result in protracted class conflicts and serious civil strife. Recognizing that a greater modicum of social justice is required to improve social cohesion and create more peaceable coexistence, the twelve detailed proposals that follow should be formalized by our representatives to create a healthier, more secure and more sustainable society. These are, in effect, needed social insurance policies that are surprisingly affordable -- and vastly preferable to stimulated inequality, antagonistic conflict and chaotic instability.

The gap between the wealthiest Americans and the poorest is wider in the USA today than it has been since the Roaring Twenties or the tawdry Gilded Age before it, with their excessive conspicuous consumption and greedy robber barons. The richest 20 Americans have more wealth right now than the bottom 50% combined, and the top 1% owns more wealth than the bottom 90%. *The Lessons of History* teach us that such a condition of really excessive concentrated wealth creates an increasingly critical situation that should be addressed by enacting laws that make our society significantly fairer. Otherwise, social strife and revolutionary fervor will likely create a redistribution of poverty and insecurity for all, according to the philosophic historians Will and Ariel Durant.

Laudable pro-democracy movements since colonial days around the world have given broader freedoms to billions of people, and it is sad that ambitious and corrupt politicians are now trying to drive this movement in reverse. It is becoming too risky to allow politics-as-usual to be perpetuated without far-reaching reforms, or to accept any further steps backwards. What the world really needs now is farsighted, forward thinking and inclusive-minded collaborative problem solving, not leaders who exploit anti-immigrant sentiments and engage in emotion-hijacking fear-mongering demagoguery to gain and abuse power in ways that are deceitful, discriminatory, anti-egalitarian, retrogressive and repressive. We should strongly support representatives who champion truly civilizing forces of fair trade, democratic governance and fair-minded principles, and reject leaders who are dangerously reactive and authoritarian. There are already far too many plutocratic and oligarchic, totalitarian and dictatorial governments ruling in countries around the

planet, like in Russia, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the Philippines, China, India, Poland, Hungary -- and the United States.

These proposals are set forth to honor the hopes and prospects of humankind for fairer and saner societies. These ideas would help create a real Better Deal that would make all Americans more secure, and would work better for all, not just those who are the most privileged. These ideas should be regarded as well-considered ideas of a relatively objective observer, and a providential example of the "stragglings thoughts of individuals" that Thomas Paine referred to when he offered his cogent ideas in *Common Sense*, as the basis for wise and able leaders to use in creating a fairer new form of governance.

These plans are particularly important in the USA today due to the terribly backwards, anti-progressive, anti-Black, anti-egalitarian and anti-inclusive directions in which our corrupt "conservative" leaders are driving us.

To Do the Right Thing, or Not To Do the Right Thing, THAT is the Question!

"Independence is my happiness, and I view things as they are, without regard to place or person;
my country is the world, and my religion is to do good."

--- Thomas Paine

1. MIDDLE CLASS FAIRNESS. Strengthen and expand the middle class and improve opportunities for social mobility. To do this, commitments should be renewed to policies that benefit the majority of people, not just policies that mostly benefit rich people. The health and well-being of the middle class and the poor have been significantly undermined in recent decades by unfairly regressive tax and spending policies. To strengthen this vital segment of American society, we must once again implement strategies that helped build the middle class in the first place: (a) govern Big Business so that it primarily benefits "We the People", not just CEOs, investors and wealthy people; (b) create a social safety net of universal healthcare, and reduce the severe inequities that currently exist in medical care; (c) enact and enforce laws that give workers more influence in their struggle against the abuses of capital; (d) make higher education more affordable for everyone by providing cheaper financing and an expansive program similar to the G.I. Bill after World War II; (e) invest more money in improving our nation's crumbling physical infrastructure, and less in a bloated military; (f) restore taxation that is more progressively structured; and (g) provide for a true Social Security retirement insurance program that protects retirees from having their payroll taxes squandered by the government.

To finance this providential plan, assess a 2020 Excess Profits Tax on every company making more than 112% of the profits they made last year. Design the plan with steeply graduated rates. This will help ensure that we do not treat people in the future "meanly and pitifully", as Thomas Paine put it in *Common Sense* by "running the next generation into debt" to solve the problems of today. This would make the plan truly fiscally responsible.

2. CLIMATE ACTION PLAN. Implement an immediately effective Climate Action Plan to address the unfolding climate crisis by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Assess a Pigouvian Green Fee of \$1 per gallon on every gallon of gasoline sold. Design this Green Fee on usages of fossil fuels so that it will gain broadly-based support by because it is progressive, beneficially egalitarian and eminently fair. Ensure that this will actually make the bottom half of people in our society a bit better off financially, through fee-and-dividend provisions. This Green Fee plan will thus avoid opposition to increased fuel taxes like that experienced in France by people in the Yellow Vest movement.

Use some of the money generated to invest in cleaner energy alternatives, which fortuitously happen to be indefinitely renewable instead of being limited in global reserves and tragically harmful in use.

This fee-and-dividend feature could resemble that proposed by the Citizens Climate Lobby, which would make the bottom 50% of the populace better off with the dividends they will receive in excess of the cost of carbon taxes incurred for an average usage of gasoline. Also dedicate funding for relief and recovery efforts from natural disasters around the globe that are becoming more and more costly as increasing numbers of people are in harms way, and as more extreme weather events are taking place with increasing frequency, intensity and disastrous potential, due to the destabilizing impacts of atmospheric greenhouse gases on the global climate and communities worldwide.

This plan will serve providential purposes and have a dramatic positive effect by reducing the use of fossil fuels because the higher cost of oil will stimulate large investments in conservation, improved energy efficiency and clean

energy alternatives. If such a plan had been put into effect in 2016, it would have raised about \$125 billion on the 3.2 trillion vehicle miles driven in the U.S. (in total during the year), assuming an average mileage of 25 mpg. The projected \$125 billion in revenues generated from this green fee should be allocated as follows:

(2A) Give a new tax credit of \$500 per household to everyone filing a tax return that has a net income of less than \$75,000. This allowance will offset the higher cost of gasoline for these people to drive 12,000 miles per year at an average 25 miles per gallon, plus a \$100 bonus for supporting the implementation of this new Good Deal plan. For those who don't drive, or drive less than 12,000 miles per year, or get better gas mileage, then "bully for you"! Keep the tax credit, and thanks from everyone for contributing less to traffic woes and excessive emissions. Annual allocation: \$50 billion.

(2B) Invest enough money in carbon-offset programs to make the USA carbon neutral for all miles driven each year. It will cost just 9 cents of the \$1 Green Fee per gallon for the USA to go "carbon neutral" by investing in carbon-offset programs. This will help the USA move toward independence from its addiction to the finite existing amounts of non-renewable fossil fuels, which happen to be odiously polluting when burned, in addition to being climate destabilizing. Model this program on the outstanding organization Cool Effect, which that offers a dozen specific carbon reduction projects around the world, some of which have marvelous win/win collateral outcomes such as dramatically improving the respiratory health of thousands of appreciative people in Uganda who are given cleaner energy cook stoves for preparing their meals. Annual allocation: \$12 billion.

(2C) Make investments in good public transportation, clean energy innovation, and subsidized international sharing of the latest and best technologies for renewable energy alternatives and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, along with better protections of tropical and temperate forests worldwide. Invest \$12 billion each year under this program.

(2D) Make contributions to a Climate Disaster Relief Fund and the Green Climate Fund to pay for some of the costs of weather-related disasters both in the U.S. and abroad, as advocated by the "Group of 77" developing nations (established in 1964 -- it currently includes 135 countries). Poor countries in the developing world have a persuasive argument when they assert that richer developed nations have a moral obligation to shoulder more of the costs of extreme hardships being suffered due to climate disasters in their countries. These natural disasters include more powerful hurricanes, typhoons and tornadoes, torrential rains, coastal flooding, heat waves, disappearing arable lands, intensifying wildfires, and expanding desertification. Rich countries, after all, have spewed the most emissions into the atmosphere in the last 150 years, and thereby have contributed most to the accelerating climate crisis. Invest \$40 billion each year in this program.

(2E) Increase U.S. investments in humanitarian foreign aid, and in international family planning programs and women's health clinics worldwide. Invest \$12 billion each year in these programs. Cost summary:

Green Fee Investment Recap

Tax credits to offset higher gasoline taxes	\$ 50 billion
Carbon offsets to make the USA carbon neutral for all vehicles	12 billion
Investments in green technologies and reforestation	12 billion
Weather disaster relief funding for people in communities worldwide	40 billion
Foreign aid, family planning programs and women's health clinics	<u>12 billion</u>
Total (rounded)	<u>\$ 125 billion</u>

3. FAIR TAXATION INITIATIVE. Give every taxpayer a tax cut on their first \$75,000 of income by making our system of taxation more steeply graduated. Offset the reduced revenues caused by this change with increases in taxes on all higher levels of income. In keeping with the sensible compromise of the wise ancient Greek lawmaker Solon, the incomes of the wealthiest people should be taxed at rates that are 12 times the rates on the lowest income taxpayers. Calibrate this reform to ensure that it generates enough revenue to balance the budget and not add to the national debt in normal non-pandemic years.

It should be recognized that lower tax rates on the first \$75,000 of net income for every taxpayer are very fair because they give tax cuts to each and every taxpayer. The rates on incomes over \$151,900 that are proposed below are higher, but they are still a relatively good deal for high-income earners, considering that the top rate was at least 70% for every single year from 1936 to 1981. During that period, broadly shared prosperity prevailed, and the rate of economic growth was much higher than in the years since then. This may be a surprise, and it refutes the trickle-down propaganda that rationalizes regressive changes in taxes as being desirable because they supposedly contribute to stronger economic growth. (The top tax rate in 1980 was 70% on all incomes over \$600,000 in current dollars. The lower 60% rate proposed below generously applies only on incomes over \$25 million.)

These egalitarian changes in tax tables could be called the **Social Justice Taxation Act**. Here is a providential recommendation for this restructuring of income tax rates:

<u>Taxable Income</u>	2016 Federal Tax Rates on <u>Net Income *</u>	Proposed 2020 Federal Tax Rates on <u>Net Income *</u>	<u>Net Change</u>
\$ 0 to \$ 18,550	10%	5%	Lower by 5%
\$ 18,551 to \$ 75,300	15%	12%	Lower by 3%
\$ 75,301 to \$ 151,900	25%	25%	Unchanged
\$ 151,901 to \$ 231,450	28%	30%	Higher by 2%
\$ 231,451 to \$ 250,000	33%	36%	Higher by 3%
\$ 250,001 to \$ 413,350	33%	38%	Higher by 5%
\$ 413,351 to \$ 466,950	35%	40%	Higher by 5%
\$ 466,951 to \$ 1,000,000	39.6%	45%	Higher by 5.4%
\$ 1,000,000 to \$ 25,000,000	39.6%	48%	Higher by 8.4%
\$ 25,000,000 and above	39.6%	60%	Higher by 20.4%

* Note: These rates are for people who have the status of "Married, Filing Jointly". The Tax Tables should be adjusted in a consistent manner for all the current categories of taxpayers.

Taxes on capital gains and on heir's inheritances from rich parents should also be revised to be more steeply graduated. Here is an Estate Tax reform proposal: Allow a generous exclusion of a non-taxable amount for each estate of \$2,500,000. For estates worth more than \$2.5 million, a 30% tax should be assessed on the amount of estates between \$2.5 million and \$5 million, 40% on amounts between \$5 million and \$10 million, 50% on those amounts between \$10 million and \$25 million, and 60% on any amounts in excess of \$25 million.

Three other strategies should be used to ensure that tax inequities are reduced, as adduced in *Three Bills of Right - A Triumvirate of Responsible Actions for the Greater Good*. These include: (1) the elimination of tax loopholes that allow giant corporations to evade tens of billions of dollars in U.S. federal income taxes each year; (2) a new requirement for hedge fund managers to finally pay taxes at regular rates instead of ridiculously low capital gains rates; and (3) a reduction in tax advantages that investors receive for dividend income and capital gains in excess of \$12,000 in any given year.

This tax reform plan should be designed to result in a net increase in tax revenues that would generate \$50 billion per year to be used to reduce social and environmental injustices that exist in our society today. Provisions should be included that will prevent costs from being externalized onto society that are creating terribly harmful environmental injustices against poor people and minority communities. Wasteful spending should be cut from the military budget, and anything suspiciously like price gouging contracting or crony capitalist pork barrel spending should be better controlled. Corporate welfare subsidies should be eliminated, and bureaucratic red tape should be evaluated and streamlined, consistent with long-term greater good values.

4. **ECOLOGICAL SANITY**. Make a revolutionary commitment to sustainable existence and a better quality of life for people today and in the future. To accomplish this goal, a farsighted Ecological Balance Initiative should be enacted that gives higher priority to smart ideas like those articulated in *Three Bills of Right*.

5. **ETHICAL POLITICS**. Politicians and our government should be made more responsive to the needs of the people,

and to the longer term greater good of the largest number of people over the longest period of time. One way to accomplish this would be to enact effective campaign finance reforms to reduce the corrupting influence of Big Money in our elections and in the lobbying of our representatives in Congress. We should put into effect publicly financed "Clean Money, Clean Election" legislation nationwide. Additionally, Congressional district lines for all gerrymandered districts should be redrawn by independent people or politically balanced commissions before the 2020 elections, because extreme gerrymandering in the 21st century has given unfair over-representation to conservative partisans who completely control the redistributing process in more than half the U.S. states. Such exercises of extreme partisanship in drawing gerrymandered congressional districts are done to disenfranchise the majority of Americans, so they are egregious abuses of power.

Truly bipartisan initiatives should be implemented to reduce the influence of *Dark Money* and institutionalized bribery. In addition, a far-reaching Government Ethics Act should be enacted to prevent politicians in Congress and the White House from engaging in shady dealings and conflicts of interest in our Crazytown capitol, with its unconscionably proliferating "culture of corruption". Perverse incentives and wrongheaded subsidies should be eliminated. The overarching power that big corporations have in Congress should be reduced, as advocated by the sensible Move to Amend Coalition. And the interests of workers, women, children, minorities, entrepreneurs, small businesses, and future generations should be more strongly protected.

Our American democracy should also be strengthened by ensuring greater media diversity, and by protecting voting rights, and by reducing influence-peddling scams and wanton profiteering schemes. Deceptive practices, rash risk-taking, favoritism for the rich, crony conspiracies, short-term-oriented profiteering, media manipulation, nepotism and outright fraud should be more effectively constrained.

6. CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTIONS. Our Constitution and its checks and balances should be defended from excessive infringements by the Executive Branch. The responsibilities of Congress and the civil liberties of citizens must not be unreasonably curtailed by aggressive expansions in the power of the Presidency, and the current administration must be forced to comply with subpoenas.

Also, Congress should start abiding by the Constitution in matters of war, as set forth in Article I, Section 8, Clause 11, which gives Congress, and only Congress, the power to declare war. The President is not given this power; the Constitution gives the President the power to direct the military after Congress declares war, in the capacity of Commander-in-Chief. Congress has been derelict in its War Powers responsibility ever since the last time they actually did declare war, right after the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor. The good reason this provision was established by our Founders was to avoid undesirable foreign entanglements, and to ensure that the President does not get the country into a war without public debate or broad assessments of ramifications, consequences and risks. In our political duopoly system, our elected representatives have deferred to the president in many wars, like those in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq, and done so out of expediency and cowardice, and for one overriding unprincipled principal purpose -- profiteering! Follow the money!!

Citizens should be assured of reasonable privacy protections, and unwarranted secrecy should yield to greater openness. Those who exploit public fears and anxieties to divide people, and who gain power using treacherous deceit and misleading propaganda, should not be allowed to rule despotically, or to suppress dissent. Rampant spying on the American people with warrantless monitoring of communications should be curtailed. Violations of international treaties on torture should be renounced, and any future uses of "extraordinary renditions" of prisoners to offshore prisons should be prohibited. Secret military tribunals, the abridgement of habeas corpus rights, the obstruction of oversight and investigations, and disdain for human rights should be circumvented, and the military prison at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba should be closed.

7. A VIBRANT AND SOUND ECONOMY. Protect the economy by sensibly regulating banks and the financial industry to prevent harms done by overly risky speculation, debt leveraging, corporate conglomeration, and unchecked conflicts of interest. It is high time that the unaccountable power of big corporate entities is more intelligently limited, and that loopholes are closed and deregulatory improprieties reversed that allow corporations to evade paying taxes and externalize costs and risks onto society. Broadly shared prosperity should be promoted, and effective steps should be taken to reduce the concentration of wealth and political power in the hands of the few. Stronger efforts should be made to prevent abuses of power and excessive privileges for insiders and cronies. Our leaders should adhere to

economically sound policies, and adopt auspicious innovative ideas. Sensible public investments and greater transparency should be encouraged. Human concerns and ecological values, not profits alone, should be given serious consideration in all economic decisions.

The overarching goal of the economy should be economic justice and farsighted environmental policies and the sustainability of our aggregate activities. We should stop pandering so exclusively to wealthy people and CEOs, speculators, economic fundamentalists, the reactionary religious right, investors, war profiteers, polluters and stock market beneficiaries who often oppose common sense regulations, oversight and accountability. Trends in our society and government should be reversed when they create serious systemic risks, such as highly leveraged speculation, fraudulent swindles, fiscal irresponsibility, deceptive and discriminatory practices, dishonesty, and extreme partisanship. Government bailouts should be used only to safeguard the greater interests of the mainstream public, and not mainly the interests of investors and Wall Street banks. All economic stimulus and recovery efforts should contain just provisions and ecologically sound plans.

The practice of maximizing profits by externalizing costs onto society should be constrained to help prevent serious misallocations of resources. Here is a fair recommendation for how to immediately begin accounting for real costs that are being unfairly and irresponsibly externalized onto society. An estimated \$400 billion in costs are being incurred in the U.S. every year related to pollution, respiratory diseases (before COVID-19), toxic wastes, harms to the environment, and natural disasters like intensifying storms, heat waves, wildfires, flooding and crop failures -- which are being made worse by global warming-exacerbated changes in natural weather patterns. This \$400 billion represents about 2% of the annual U.S. Gross Domestic Product.

Proposal: Establish a Future Viability Assessment on all products and services. This action would require real costs to be included where they should properly be reflected. This should be done on a progressive scale with higher assessments for polluting industries that are involved in unsustainable practices, and lower assessments for greener industries. All industries should be classified by a panel of independent-minded economists according to the degree the industries contribute to unsustainable production and consumption. For instance, the most polluting industries should be required to pay a 4% assessment, while the greenest industries would be charged a 0% assessment. Deal with the regressive impact of resulting price inflation on people who are least able to afford it by partially offsetting the higher costs by giving a new \$300 tax credit annually to every American taxpayer. This would offset the 2% higher costs on every taxpayer's first \$15,000 of spending.

Use the funds generated from this Future Viability Assessment to invest in pollution prevention and mitigation activities, cleaning-up pollution and toxic wastes, covering medical costs related to asthma and other health adversities caused by environmental damages, and making efforts to mitigate costs associated with climate change impacts and correlated natural disasters. Also, create more robust protections of forests, wetlands, rivers, oceans, coral reef communities, fresh water resources, National Parks, open spaces and wilderness areas.

8. BALANCED BUDGETS INITIATIVE. Stop the federal government from recklessly indulging in the short-term expediency of borrowing enormous amounts of money to squander it on tax breaks for rich people, ramping up military spending, financing pandemic relief measures and bailing out big businesses. Make a binding commitment to reduce the spiraling use of debt, and to stop the lavish waste of taxpayer funds and borrowed money. To achieve this positive goal, a new mechanism should be established that that will be effective in discouraging our expedient inclination to live beyond our means. We should create a Fiscal Responsibility Act that will force lawmakers and the executive branch to set honest priorities and end shortsighted government "borrow-and-spend" tactics that result in wasteful spending on pork barrel-like projects or misguided subsidies and socially irresponsible profiteering, as well as on wars of aggression and unaffordable entitlements.

The following five-year plan is proposed to begin on January 1, 2021, as clarity over pandemic debt comes into focus. This plan would be effective because it would give powerful motives to the primary deciders in our system -- wealthy people and big corporations -- to support annual budgets that are more nearly balanced. This plan should be implemented gradually over the next four fiscal years according to a fair-minded methodology: Require Big Businesses and the highest income earners to be assessed for federal deficits at the end of every fiscal year. For the fiscal year running from October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021, assess 25% of any federal budget deficit as follows: half of this obligation will be assessed to businesses that earn net incomes of more than \$1 million, and the other half will

be assessed to individuals with taxable incomes above \$1 million. Allocate these assessments on a progressive scale with higher percentages for higher incomes. Then, in the following fiscal year, assess 50% of any deficits using the same methodology; and in the year after that, assess 75%, and then 100% of any such deficits.

This plan will give the powerful vested interests that have been primary beneficiaries of the short-term-oriented and irresponsible expediency of mortgaging the future for narrow benefits a powerful motive to step forward to make our system eminently fairer. This plan would cause these interest groups to shift from supporting deficit spending to finding much better ways of balancing government revenues and spending, and would topple the hegemony of power-abusers vested in the current status quo.

9. WAR AND PEACE. Only with truer justice will we have greater peace, at home and abroad. Our political representatives should courageously commit the United States to peaceful diplomatic resolutions of conflicts between all nations in the world. We need to pursue foreign policies that enhance mutual security for all, and that respect the sovereignty of other nations. We should reject wars for oil and other resources. Effective ways should be found to prevent military aggression, preemptive warfare and endless military occupations of other countries. Policy deciders should be prevented from waging wars to divert attention and money from domestic problems. We can't allow power to be rashly abused under the guise of a misleading and false national security. The use of sovereignty-violating unmanned drone aircraft armed with Hellfire missiles should be more strictly restrained. These supersonic missiles strike targets before the sound of their approach reaches their victims, and kill many innocent persons.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the war hero of World War II and U.S. President from 1956 to 1961, warned Americans about the military-industrial complex and the "disastrous rise of misplaced power". He emphatically and wisely counseled: "Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together." Security and liberty prospering together is good!

Full funding should be restored to State Department diplomacy missions, and a Cabinet-level Department of Peace should be created to promote collaborative problem solving and smart statesmanship on the international stage. This would help responsibly resolve current armed conflicts and prevent ones in the future. Stronger international institutions, agreements and laws should be supported to prevent wars, torture and genocide.

A summit of Middle East countries should be convened to develop good ways for solving conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Yemen so as to be likely to ensure that these nations do not become failed states. A bold new plan should be developed to guarantee a safe homeland for Palestinians, and to make sure peaceful coexistence with Israel is assured. An initiative should be launched to reduce the influence of radical extremism and reactionary fundamentalism in religions worldwide. International social justice, sustainable development and human rights should be promoted as top priorities, along with these proposed peace-building initiatives. Significant taxes should be levied on all sales of guns, ammunition and military weapons, with funds generated by these taxes to be used to create fairer societies and to engage in proactive peace-building programs.

10. HONEST ACCOUNTING. Require the General Accounting Office to improve internal controls and accounting and reporting practices, with the goal of having an unqualified audit opinion rendered on the federal government to Congress and the American people. This audit opinion should certify that the financial statements of the federal government are fairly stated in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. In connection with this audit, the GAO (or newly-created civil Grand Juries of distinguished and responsible citizens) should be empowered to make recommendations designed to make government spending -- and Defense Department spending in particular -- better controlled and more frugal, honest and accountable.

11. FAIR AND EQUAL HUMAN RIGHTS. Ratify the Equal Rights Amendment to give equal rights to women and men. The ERA was first proposed in 1923, and was once ratified by 35 of the necessary 38 states (3/4 of the 50 states). This cornerstone of fairness should be incorporated into our great U.S. Constitution. Likewise, a new Constitutional Amendment should be created to give gay men and lesbian women fairer treatment, equal civil rights, and reasonable protections under the law. And sensible and comprehensive immigration reforms should be formulated instead of politicizing the issue. And the Constitution should be strengthened to make clear our common agreement that no Church should be able to impose its parochial dogmas on society, and that the First Amendment guarantees are strongly established that ensure a separation between Church and State.

12. **POPULATION GROWTH.** One of the fundamental contributing factors to all our social and environmental problems, and to many of the conflicts in the world, is the surging number of human beings on Earth. Global human population growth needs to be reduced from its current net increase of more than 70 million people every year. To accomplish this, we should provide free contraceptives to women everywhere who want them, including emergency "morning after pills", so that the incidence of both unwanted pregnancies and abortions will be reduced. Better education is needed, along with expanded opportunities for girls and women worldwide. Women's healthcare clinics should be established and generously funded. Initiatives like this would have a great humanitarian collateral benefit of reducing cervical cancer and the transmission of sexually-transmitted diseases like AIDS. Steps should be taken to ensure that the 'Global Gag Rule' never again restricts U.S. support for family planning programs abroad, and the U.S. should double its modest annual contributions to the United Nations Population Fund. Women should be guaranteed the right to make their own personal reproductive choices. Women who do not want children must not be forced to have them. To codify this fair-minded goal, an Amendment to the U.S. Constitution should be enacted that establishes reproductive rights for women, and follows the practical precedent of unrestricted rights for a safe abortion during the first trimester of any pregnancy, as set forth by the Supreme Court in the *Roe vs. Wade* decision in 1973.

Concluding Commentary

To accomplish these twelve big initiatives, *We the People* must demand new political leaders who act as fair-minded, reasonable and honorable representatives of the broadest interests of the American people. Politicians should be expected to keep the best interests of all people foremost in mind in every policy-making consideration. Effective changes need to be made to our political system to staunch the excessive influence of Big Money, and of public trust-betraying wealthy "conservatives". We must take back control of our government from those who represent outsized privileges for rich people, CEOs, war profiteers, polluters, deceitful demagogues, and the reactionary religious right. We should rightly honor and demand greater honesty, and deny power to Machiavellian politicians who intentionally lie to people for personal gain, and who stoke their insecurities, amp up their resentments and take unfair advantage of their fears. We should choose leaders who promote policies that are fiscally responsible and more egalitarian, and who oppose discrimination against people in minority groups, or who espouse exceedingly harsh approaches to vulnerable immigrants and asylum seekers. These leaders should honestly avoid authoritarian abuses of power and unjust military interventions, and reject ecologically unwise courses of action.

When many of these words were first written, this last paragraph concluded, "Specifically, Donald Trump and his grotesque tactics should be soundly defeated in his bid for power in the November 2016 elections." In the chaotic aftermath of the illegitimate Trump/Pence coup, responsible and patriotic folks should now join together to remove from office all the anti-progressive, anti-egalitarian, anti-democratic and anti-environmental politicians in Congress and in the Executive branch of government.

Truly,
 Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
 June 21, 2020