



## Three Bills of Right: A Triumvirate of Responsible Actions for the Greater Good

An Earth Manifesto publication by Dr. Tiffany B. Twain

I propose three detailed plans that would be quite effective in addressing three of the most egregious injustices that humanity is collectively committing around the world today. These three overarching injustices are:

(1) An epochal ecological crisis is unfolding due to our lavish consumerism and profligate resource use, together with our polluting activities, over-fishing, wasteful depletion of fresh water resources and fossil fuels, deforestation, the spewing of enormous quantities of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, and the damages we are wreaking on the providential ecosystems upon which we depend.

(2) Federal government policies are using the fiscally irresponsible expediency of deficit spending every year, and correlated rash increases in the national debt, to burden people in the future with financial obligations. This mounting tidal wave of red ink is effectively fleecing the future and creating a wrong-headed intergenerational transfer of wealth from our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren to bankers, investors, speculators and wealthy people today. And,

(3) Social inequities and disparities in power and wealth between rich people and everyone else are being made worse by shortsightedness and regressive tax policies and a system that champions a status quo of profiteering on things like war, oil, medical insurance and drugs above all other values.

All human endeavors are overshadowed by these developing inequities. We should regard it as our transcendent obligation to begin dealing fairly with these three mounting challenges in fairer and more responsible ways. We need big, structural change, and we should not wait until some future date to honestly address these problems. I propose three salubrious solutions to these dilemmas. They include three important new laws:

- (1) An Ecological Sanity Initiative;
- (2) A Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2020; and,
- (3) A Social Justice Taxation Act.

A convincing rationale for why these laws should be enacted was included years ago in *A Second Open Letter to President Obama - Provocative Proposals for Real 'Change We Can Believe In'*, in the Earth Manifesto. Check it out at [www.EarthManifesto.com](http://www.EarthManifesto.com).

**Proposal #1. ECOLOGICAL SANITY INITIATIVE.** Make a revolutionary commitment to sustainable existence and a better quality of life for people alive today AND for all people who will be born in the future. To accomplish this, enact this farsighted Initiative that gives higher priority to the following ideas:

1. Honor Precautionary Principles in all decision-making, as enunciated in the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. This will help protect Earth's ecosystems and biological diversity.
2. Restructure the economy according to a sensible consensus of well-prioritized national goals.
3. Implement full-cost pricing that prevents corporations from externalizing costs onto society related to pollution, toxic wastes, environmental damages and resource depletion costs. Mandate the inclusion of these costs of production in the prices of all products and services, and make sure they include a large contribution to a "rainy

day fund" to cover the growing costs of extreme weather events and other natural disasters made worse by a destabilized climate.

4. Increase gasoline taxes and implement other carbon emission taxes to fund incentives for more efficient usages of energy, conservation programs, and the development of renewable energy alternatives, along with programs that will slow rainforest and temperate forest deforestation worldwide.

5. Assess fees for wasteful uses of water, fossil fuels, and other non-renewable resources, and use the funds generated by these measures to help us make the transition to renewable alternatives.

6. Require all coal-burning power plants to be modernized with pollution-control equipment.

7. Make urban areas more livable through smart investments in safe communities, urban parks, and good public transportation.

8. Discourage suburban sprawl by making urban areas more desirable to live in through smart zoning rules, and by making bigger investments in revitalization programs.

9. Defend and enforce the Clean Air Act and its New Source Review provisions.

10. Establish more protected ocean Marine Reserves to reduce overfishing.

11. More strongly enforce environmental laws, including the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Wilderness Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and the Endangered Species Act.

12. Increase protections of National Parks, Bureau of Land Management lands, National Wild and Scenic Rivers, and roadless areas of National Forests.

Proposal #2. **BALANCED BUDGETS INITIATIVE.** Our federal government is recklessly borrowing huge amounts of money from people in the future, and squandering it to give low tax rates for high-income earners and corporate subsidies and bailouts of corporations deemed too-big-to-fail. We are also financing wars and military occupations and other short-term-oriented goals by indulging in the irresponsible expediency of borrowing large sums of money. The spiraling use of debt and lavish waste of taxpayer funds and borrowed money should be reduced by implementing a Balanced Budget Initiative, as spelled out in *One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies*.

This plan would strongly discourage our irresponsible inclination to live beyond our means. It is a five-year plan that is guaranteed to be effective because it would give a powerful motivation to the primary deciders in our system -- wealthy people and big corporations -- to demand and support balanced budgets. It would work by requiring big businesses and the wealthy to be assessed, incrementally, for federal deficits at the end of each fiscal year.

This plan would lead to balanced budgets because it would create powerful political pressure on politicians to make the difficult budgetary decisions on taxes and spending that are required to ensure fiscal responsibility. Instead of allowing our representatives to resort to the easy, weak-willed, self-serving and shortsighted expediency of deficit financing all the time, they would be forced to make more responsible public policy decisions. Confidence in the government would increase with this new state of greater fiscal responsibility.

This plan is needed more than ever in the third year of the Trump regime, when the latest CBO projections project annual deficits dangerously exceeding \$1 trillion each and every year through 2030. And these projections implausibly assume there will be no recession in the coming 10 years that would disrupt revenues and cause costs to spike.

A combination of the following strategies should be used to ensure that deficits are minimized, up front:

1. Prioritize government spending more intelligently, and shift budgets to match these priorities. Determine these priorities in accordance with honest assessments of the common good and the long-term impacts of all spending on greater good goals.

2. Reform our political system to reduce corruption and the influence of corporate lobbyists, and to establish a stronger code of ethics for our representatives in Congress.
3. Reinstate Pay-As-You-Go spending rules for the federal budget, and prevent new programs from being implemented without an adequate source of funding being identified.
4. Courageously reduce total military spending by \$250 billion as soon as practicable. Watch the extraordinarily important documentary film *A Bold Peace* for context. It is about Costa Rica, which recently celebrated the 70th anniversary of the country having abolished its army, courageously and beneficially embracing the benefits of peace, demilitarization and great respect for international law.
5. Reduce government waste and control pork barrel spending more strictly, and first evaluate and then streamline senseless bureaucracy and red tape.
6. Reduce subsidies to large businesses like Big Oil, Big Drug, and Big Agribusiness companies, and alter rules that allow gargantuan tax evasion schemes.
7. Act to limit the growth of 'entitlements' in the fairest and most responsible ways possible.

Recognizing that borrowing money can be a smart investment for specifically targeted plans, create a system for selling bonds to finance voter-approved projects like making improvements in our nation's schools, public transportation systems, highways, streets and other aspects of our nation's physical infrastructure. A system similar to the initiative process in direct democracy, which is used by State and local governments, should be developed to identify worthy projects. Funds to finance these specifically-approved undertakings should be borrowed through U.S. Treasury bonds backed by the full faith of the federal government, so that funds will be raised at low interest rates and the lowest possible interest expense.

The provisions of the Balanced Budget Initiative will ensure that our government will no longer be on the path to financial insolvency, so this sound financial footing will appeal to bond-buying individuals and institutions and they will be willing to buy government obligations at relatively low interest rates.

Proposal #3. FAIR TAXATION INITIATIVE. Make taxation more progressive. This means making income taxes more steeply graduated. This restructuring of our federal tax system should increase taxes on higher levels of earnings that the top 2% of Americans make, while keeping tax rates the same for everyone on earnings less than \$250,000 per year. Repeal the Republican Tax Cut scam enacted in December 2017.

To accomplish this egalitarian goal, we should enact a Fair Taxation Initiative that will make Tax Code revisions that ensure taxes are more progressively graduated. This Act should be made consistent with the criteria of the wise lawgiver Solon, who created taxes that were graduated so that rich people pay taxes at a rate 12 times that of the poor.

The details of this Fair Taxation Initiative are spelled out in *One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Transform Our Societies*.

Half of the net increase in tax revenues generated by this Initiative should be applied to reduce budget deficits. The other half of the net tax increase should be dedicated to reducing the social and environmental injustices that exist in our society today, including provisions designed to prevent the externalizing of costs upon society, because they are creating profound environmental injustices, particularly among poor people and minority communities.

In addition to this Fair Taxation Initiative, the following strategies should simultaneously be used to ensure that taxation inequities are minimized:

1. Eliminate tax loopholes and offshore incorporation that allow giant corporations to evade tens of billions of dollars in U.S. federal income taxes each year.
2. Reduce the size of the significant tax advantages that investors receive for dividend income and capital gains as opposed to higher amounts that workers are required to pay on their hard-earned wages, and require hedge fund managers to pay taxes on their income at regular rates, not at low capital gains rates.

3. Revise Estate Taxes on the inheritances of rich kids so that they are much more steeply graduated above a generous exclusion of \$5 million per family.

Itemized lists of far more extensive plans to affect positive change in our societies are adduced in *Common Sense Revival* and Part Four of the *Earth Manifesto* online.

Truly yours,

Dr. Tiffany Twain

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#### GERMINATING:

The outstanding film *A Bold Peace* inspired the following paragraphs.

One vital aspect of national security is freedom from social unrest, because it contributes to political stability. And make no mistake about it: a large middle class is needed for genuine political stability. Repressive rule is not the answer, for bigger police forces and ratcheted up military spending serve to undermined the general welfare, and thus make countries less secure. Costa Rica found this to be true when it abolished its military in 1949 and used the money to invest in free public education and universal healthcare.

The current all-but-unprecedented extremes of income and wealthy inequality in the USA today are destabilizing, and dangerously unsustainable. The current wide disparities between the 1% and the 99% are creating serious strife and instability, and are unsustainable. Our democratic republic should be about the general welfare of all of the people, and NOT mainly about the glorification and enrichment of the president and his cronies.

Since inequality is a big threat to peace and stability, we should strengthen our democracy by striving to make the middle class stronger through a fairer distribution of wealth. This is desirable from the standpoint of the general welfare of the people, as well as from considerations of national security. Money corrupts, making it easier to facilitate the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the top 1%, and this increasing monopoly on income and wealth prevents regular people from having their interests fairly represented.

How best to defend a democracy? Costa Rica decided to get rid of its army. The concentration of power in the military is a threat to peace, especially in small countries, where military forces are generally too small to make people safer from external attack, and in fact are historically used most impactfully when civilian governments are overthrown in military coups.

We should strive to resolve conflicts peaceably by talking to each other in respectful dialogue, and through non-violent conflict resolution, diplomacy, negotiation, and seeking win-win solutions and fair compromises. And we should respect the rule of law, especially international laws that represent the common good for the whole.

Remember a lesson taught to us by Costa Rica's experiment in demilitarization: a high degree of social cohesion is fostered by peace and generous investments in education and health. This is one reason why Costa Rica is Number One on the Happy Planet Index. It also is revealingly much higher on the Global Peace Index than the USA (we are pathologically 128th out of 163 countries evaluated).

The foreign policies of the U.S. have been disastrous to Central America and the region, because it has a long and treacherous history of intervening militarily in Central America and Latin America on numerous occasions, and of supporting dictatorships that harshly repress the people. This contributes to making countries unstable, and has been a causative factor in driving one million refugees and immigrants into Costa Rica from Honduras and other neighboring countries in the past three decades, causing social and financial problems. The magnitude of this problem can be seen by understanding that Costa Rica has a total population of only 5 million people, so one million refugees and immigrants represents 20% of the people.

Support for dictators is treachery against the people of the country being ruthlessly ruled, so it is a strategy based on depriving people of their liberties, not standing up for them. The United States should return to its pre-Trump ideals and stand up for human rights and the rights of working people and women.

Regional demilitarization in Central America would have made the region vastly better off that it is today, and

there would not have been such a desperate need for people to seek better lives in Costa Rica.