



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, deforestation, wasteful depletion of fresh water resources and fossil fuels, 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. And,

(2) 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, fossil fuels, medical insurance and prescription drugs above all other values.

(3) 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.

All human endeavors are overshadowed by these on-going 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 Social Justice Taxation Act; and,
- (3) A Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2021.

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.

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 will give 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. 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.

3. 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 to the burning of fossil fuels along with programs that will slow deforestation of rainforests and temperate forests worldwide.

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

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

6. Create more resilient societies by adopting new measures to protect fresh water resources and their conservation, especially in areas stricken by periodic droughts.

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 and public health and safety.

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

10. 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.

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

12. Restructure the economy according to a sensible consensus of better-prioritized national goals.

Proposal #2. 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. Also push for a global minimum 15% tax rate on corporations to prevent multinational corporations from evading paying taxes.

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 structured 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 social and 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. Close the "carried interest loophole" that allows hedge fund managers to pay taxes on their income at low capital gains rates instead of at higher rates paid by working people on their incomes.

3. 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.

4. 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.

Proposal #3. **BALANCED BUDGETS INITIATIVE.** Our federal government is recklessly borrowing huge amounts of money from people in the future, and squandering it on giving low top tax rates to high-income earners, along with corporate handouts, special deals and bailouts, especially to corporations considered to be 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 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 was needed more than ever during the Trump regime, before the pandemic, when the Congressional Budget Office projected annual deficits dangerously exceeding \$1 trillion each and every year through 2030. And these projections implausibly assumed there would be no recession in the decade to ensue that would disrupt revenues or 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. Reduce annual total military spending by \$100 billion as soon as practicable. Watch the extraordinarily important documentary *A Bold Peace* for context. This excellent and informative film tells the story of Costa Rica, which celebrated the 70th anniversary in 2018 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, and this sound financial footing will appeal to bond-buying individuals and institutions, ensuring that they will be willing to buy government obligations at relatively low interest rates.

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

Truly yours,

Dr. Tiffany Twain

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Addendum

SEE HERE NOW. Note that to fix the big problems that afflict our country, we must overcome the stubborn opposition to good solutions by Trump Republicans. These politicians wield excessive hegemony over lawmaking at both the state and federal level, and they do so by exploiting people's fears and emotions and using a litany of manipulative tactics that include deceiving people through shrewd and repetitive "talking point" messaging, propagating big lies, misinformation and false conspiracy theories, distracting voters with "whataboutism" arguments, using divide-to-conquer hot button wedge issues, and acting with an uncompromising insistence on imposing unpopular policies on the populace. It is sensational that Trump Republicans wield so much power when they oppose many things that significant majorities of the American people support, like affordable health care, public health safety measures during the pandemic, lower prescription drug prices, higher minimum wages, responsible climate action, protections of the right to vote, greater economic and social justice, regulations that rein in corporate abuses of influence, enacting more effective gun safety laws, guaranteeing women the right to make reproductive choices in their lives, ensuring a separation of church and state, protecting the environment against corporate despoliation, and getting Big Money out of the drivers seat in our politics.

Many "conservative" politicians won seats in the U.S. Senate and House in the 2020 elections by taking advantage of people's fears of "socialism", and by exploiting reactionary anger at widespread protests in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd by white police officers, using scare tactics about sensible efforts to enact needed police reforms by asserting that Democrats would diminish public safety by "defunding the police".

Historian Robert S. McElvaine made important points in his article *Democrats need a new message on socialism. Here's what to do.* "Before his election loss, Republican Sen. David Perdue told Georgians that he and the state's other Republican senator, Kelly Loeffler, were the only thing standing between America and "a radical socialist agenda." Democrats need an effective counter to the "socialism" canard, as well as a way to bring together their progressive and moderate wings.

A necessary -- though insufficient -- starting point will be to make clear to voters that what the Republicans are denouncing as "socialism" is nothing like the current systems in Cuba or Venezuela or the old systems in the Soviet Union, China and Eastern Europe. Rather, what Republicans decry as "socialism" is a set of policies that a large majority of Americans strongly favor -- and from which they already benefit. The supposed "socialism" that Democrats support includes the military, police and fire departments, public schools, roads, the Post Office, Social Security, Medicare, the Affordable Care Act, requiring the wealthy to pay their fair share in taxes, combating climate change, protecting us all against contaminated foods, overseeing essential scientific research and assuring that medications -- and vaccines -- are safe and effective.

Democrats should thus go on offense, both by showing Americans the truth of what Republicans mean by "socialism" and by giving the Republicans' approach a name that truly captures what they believe. They want huge corporations and billionaires to have free rein to accumulate most of the nation's wealth without concern about how miserably the rest of the population may live -- or whether they live at all. Most importantly, though, Democrats need to start using a name for their economic approach that is both attractive and emphasizes what it really is -- not socialism, but capitalism with checks and balances.