



Advancing Equity Through Climate Solutions

# Principles for Addressing the Needs of Low and Moderate Income Workers, Families and Communities within Global Warming Legislation

America and the world face a grave challenge from global warming. Although local communities around the country are responding to this challenge by beginning to build a green economy, the time for federal action is now. Any policy that aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or address the consequences of climate change will bring about changes not only in our environment, but also in our society and our economy. The urgent need to transition to a low carbon economy presents critical choices, and we therefore should also approach climate policy as economic policy that can advance principles of fairness, opportunity, and equal access. Accordingly, global warming policies should be guided by the following [six principles](#):

## 1. Protect people and the planet

**Limit carbon emissions at a level and timeline that science dictates.**

Policies designed to limit greenhouse gas emissions and advance climate solutions must be aggressive and timely enough to ensure that the worst environmental and economic consequences of global warming are averted. Unchecked, the impacts of global warming will be costly for everyone, but they will likely hit low and moderate income people, including people of color, first and worst.

## 2. Maximize the gain

**Build an inclusive green economy providing pathways into prosperity and expanding opportunity for America's workers and communities.**

The shift to a low-carbon, clean, green economy has the potential to create large numbers of quality green-collar jobs for American workers, grow emerging industries, and improve the health of low and moderate income people and people of color, who suffer disproportionately from cancer, asthma and other respiratory ailments in the current pollution-based economy. This shift represents a significant opportunity to make cost-effective public and private investments that help rebuild and retrofit our nation, and through training and job readiness programs, to ensure that those who most need work are prepared to do the work that most needs to be done.

## 3. Minimize the pain

**Assist low and moderate-income families in meeting their basic needs.**

Energy prices are already rising as the world's supply of fossil fuels fails to keep pace with increasing demand. Because low and moderate-income households spend a larger share of their budgets on energy and other basic costs of living than better-off households, global warming legislation should ensure that any further energy-related price increases are offset by direct consumer rebates that effectively and efficiently reach these households and workers, with the assistance delivered in ways that are consistent with energy conservation goals, and with particular attention to those most in need.

## 4. Shore up resilience to climate impacts

**Assure that those who are most vulnerable to the direct effects of climate change are able to prepare and adapt.**

Climate change impacts such as severe weather events and public health threats disproportionately and adversely affect the most vulnerable, including low income, minority, and immigrant populations. At-risk communities need help adapting to the impacts of climate change and preparing to respond effectively in the event of a natural disaster.

## 5. Ease the transition

**Address the impacts of economic change for workers and communities.**

Workers in older industries that are highly reliant on carbon based energy – and the communities in which they're concentrated – must be provided with the assistance and tools necessary to make the transition to the emerging low carbon economy and to be competitive for good jobs within it.

## 6. Put a price on global warming pollution and invest in solutions

**Capture the value of carbon emissions for public purposes and invest this resource in an equitable transition to a clean energy economy.**

Greenhouse gas pollution should not result in windfall profits for corporations. The money generated by placing a price on carbon will be substantial, amounting to tens to hundreds of billions of dollars a year. This resource should be used to invest in the public good by ensuring an inclusive and fair transition to a high-road green economy, which advances the needs of workers, consumers, families, and diverse urban and rural communities while protecting the planet.

By hewing to these principles for advancing equity, opportunity, and climate justice as we transition to a clean, low-carbon economy, we can combat global warming, minimize the costs to low and moderate income Americans, and maximize the opportunity for greater and more enduring prosperity in a green economy. At the same time, we must pursue these goals within a broader framework of ensuring global climate equity. Toward that end, the United States should also play a global leadership role by supporting poor and vulnerable communities internationally in meeting the climate challenge.

### The following organizations have endorsed these principles:

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| Green For All                                     | The United Methodist Church—General Board of Church and Society                   | Half in Ten  |
| Center on Budget and Policy Priorities            | The Washington Office of Public Policy, Women's Division, United Methodist Church | NETWORK Lobby  |
| Center for American Progress                      | Green DMV   | Economics for Equity and the Environment Network     |
| Service Employees International Union             | Coalition on Human Needs  | Concerned Black Clergy of Metropolitan Atlanta, Inc. |
| NAACP   | League of United Latin American Citizens  | National Women's Law Center                          |
| National Hispanic Environmental Council           | National Skills Coalition   | Franciscan Action Network                            |
| National Latino Coalition on Climate Change       | Union for Reform Judaism  | Community Action Partnership                         |
| Change to Win                                     | Center for Law and Social Policy  | Jewish Council for Public Affairs                    |
| Oxfam America                                     | National Low Income Housing Coalition   | EcoEquity  |
| Democracia Ahora                                  | ACORN   | Friends Committee on National Legislation            |
| Wider Opportunities for Women                     | PolicyLink  | Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life         |
| National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA | Citizens for Tax Justice  |  |
| First Focus                                       | Institute for Local Self Reliance   |  |
| Economic Policy Institute                         | Enterprise Community Partners   |  |
| Redefining Progress                               | United States Conference of Catholic Bishops                                      |  |
| US Action   |   |  |