

## **The Blueprint for a Better America: Legislative Solutions for 2022**

The Blueprint for a Better America is a single legislative package, crowdsourced by the people, for the people. It seeks to address Martin Luther King Jr.'s triple evils of poverty, racism, and militarism and:

- End poverty
- End mass incarceration
- End the endless wars.

The Blueprint is supported by the members of the American Union, a bloc of swing voters inspired by our Constitutional duties to each other, and willing to collectively bargain for a better social contract. When 3.5% of Americans unionize as voters, they will control the balance of power in Washington. A full copy of the legislation is available at [AnAmericanUnion.com/blueprint](https://AnAmericanUnion.com/blueprint).

The five duties of Americans contained in the Preamble to the Constitution form the outline of the legislative proposal: **We the people, of the United States, in order to form a more perfect American Union,**

### **Establish justice by reforming the criminal justice system**

Ending mass incarceration includes an end to the federal war on drugs, as well as police and prison reform. This section is divided into three subtitles, each bearing the name of a victim of injustice.

#### **The George Floyd Justice Act would reform law enforcement policies and procedures:**

- These reforms would immediately apply to federal law enforcement officers (LEOs). States would have less than two years to enact matching reforms, otherwise their federal Byrne grants would be reduced or withheld.
- A public, searchable, national police misconduct registry would be established, making grants to states conditional on their submission of the relevant information as well as meeting national certification standards for employing LEOs.
- Federal LEOs would be prohibited from using deadly force, except as a last resort after de-escalation techniques and less lethal force had been attempted, and only if there was no substantial risk to third parties. States would be incentivized to enact the same policy.
- Federal LEOs would be required to take a training course establishing a clear duty to intervene when any LEO is using excessive force against a civilian, with states incentivized to mandate the same training.
- Chokeholds and carotid artery restraints would become a civil rights violation, with states incentivized to do the same.
- LEO's qualified immunity for civil rights violations would be removed, and the burden of proof for prosecuting violations would become acting "knowingly" or "recklessly," instead of the current "willfully."
- Any sexual acts between LEOs and people in federal custody would be considered sexual abuse; consent would not be a defense to criminal prosecution. States would be incentivized to enact the same policy.
- Forced entry for federal warrants would be restricted to daytime hours (6am-10pm), and unless a judge authorized a no-knock warrant, repeated knocking and identification would be required first. States would be incentivized to enact a similar policy, including an end to the issuance of no-knock warrants in drug cases.
- Federal cash bail would be prohibited. States would be incentivized to meet decreasing annual targets for the percentage of cases where cash bail was used from 75% down to no more than 10% by 2027.
- The 1033 program, which transfers military surplus to local police departments, would be repealed.
- Civil asset forfeiture would be eliminated on the federal level, and heavily restricted on the state level.

#### **The Weldon Angelos Justice Act would reform prosecutions, including a repeal of the federal drug war:**

- All mandatory minimums would be struck from the United States Code.

- The Espionage Act of 1917 would be amended to require a specific intent to cause harm, protecting journalists and whistleblowers.
- On passage, an affirmative defense would be created for all federal drug crimes; that the drugs were intended for recreational use. This would essentially decriminalize them immediately.
- The Controlled Substances Act would be repealed January 1, 2024, leaving states, which are laboratories of democracy, free to enforce or repeal their own drug laws as they see fit. Before this happens, the United States would give notice that we were withdrawing from UN treaties that promote the drug war.
- Completed sentences for federal drug crimes would be automatically expunged.
- A 12% sales tax would be imposed on the sale of formerly illegal drugs, or "recreational intoxicating products." The FDA would establish rules for purity and labeling.
- Funds raised by the sales tax would establish a Drug War Restorative Justice Office, to provide substance use treatment services for all who want them; legal services related to drug crimes; and services in communities most adversely impacted by the war on drugs, including job training, reentry services, literacy programs, youth recreation or mentoring programs, and health education programs.
- The provision of the REAL ID Act which relates to air travel would be clarified to apply only to those required by federal law to show identification as a condition of boarding a commercial aircraft.

The Matthew Charles Prison Reform Act would humanize incarcerated Americans and recognize our innate ability for self-improvement and rehabilitation:

- Federal prisoners would be eligible for sentence review after serving more than 10 years, for drug offenses which had been repealed, or if sentenced to a mandatory minimum which had been eliminated. A sentence reduction would require a finding that the person was not a danger to others, ready for reentry, and it was in the interests of justice. A victim's statement must be considered as well.
- The Prison Litigation Reform Act, which created a higher bar for access to the legal system for the incarcerated, would be repealed, along with the prohibition on federal Pell grants for the incarcerated.
- Grant programs to the states that incentivize higher state incarceration rates would be repealed.
- The Bureau of Prisons would provide identification documents for citizens leaving prison.
- Universal suffrage would restore voting privileges in federal elections to all adult Americans.
- The use of solitary confinement as punishment would be restricted, requiring due process with a cap of 15 consecutive days, bringing us up to the standards of the UN's Nelson Mandela Rules.
- To correct the recent Shinn v. Ramirez decision, 28 U.S.C. 2254(e) would be amended to permit evidentiary hearings after a finding of ineffective assistance of counsel.

**Insure domestic tranquility with a 10-year truce on polarizing issues**

Guns and abortion are used as wedge issues to drive the American people apart. This legislation contains a compromise, where each side gets a concession in exchange for not introducing any bans for 10 years. By addressing root causes, the number of needless deaths will fall during that time.

- The Hyde Amendment, which prohibits using federal funds for abortion, would be codified into law.
- No federal bans or restrictions on abortions could be introduced for 10 years.
- Universal background checks would be enacted, with a firearm registry explicitly not authorized.
- No federal bans on guns of any type could be introduced for 10 years.
- During these 10 years, it would be a class B misdemeanor for Congress to break this truce.

**Provide for the common defense by bringing our troops home**

America has exceeded our Constitutional mandate. Ending the endless wars has two major components: reducing our global military footprint and budget (which is greater than the world's next 11 largest defense budgets combined), and improving our moral standing on the world stage:

- The 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF), which was passed after 9/11, would sunset in 240 days. Congress would be free to pass another one if needed.
- The 1991 and 2002 AUMFs authorizing the Iraq wars would be repealed.
- The military budget would be cut 10% annually in fiscal years 2024-2027, reducing spending by 1/3rd and about \$1 trillion less than projections. Congress would need a 2/3rds super-majority to override this provision.
- Explicit authorization from Congress would be required for any use of force against Iran.
- For 10 years, no money could be spent on the planned ICBM upgrades as part of the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent Program and the W87-1 warhead modification program. Instead, the United States nuclear stockpile would be reduced by 50% by 2027.
- The Secretary of Defense would be directed to hold referenda around the 800+ foreign military bases, asking the local population if they want the US military presence to remain. Their wishes would be respected, and the Secretary would be directed to implement a corresponding base closure plan within two years of enactment.
- Arms sales to Saudi Arabia for use in its war on Yemen would be halted, and no logistical support or intelligence sharing could be given to those engaged in hostilities against Yemen.
- The use of unilateral economic sanctions as coercive measures against civilian populations would be restricted, with exceptions during military hostilities or as part of a broader coalition.
- The purchase of landmines or development of lethal autonomous weapons would be prohibited.
- Guantanamo Bay Military Prison would be closed within 240 days, and detainees with pending charges would be transferred to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas or to another country.

### **Promote the general welfare with American Union jobs**

Welfare has a specific definition: *the state of being or doing well; condition of health, happiness, and comfort; well-being; prosperity*. The constitutional duty to promote this can be best met with universal basic income (UBI). Under this legislation, approximately 300 million citizens would get an unconditional American Union Job, a no-strings-attached reminder of our Constitutional duties to each other and as compensation for the value that all Americans create.

- The Secretary of the Treasury would be directed to create digital accounts for each American, along the lines of the existing Treasury Direct program. UBI of \$1300/month for adults, \$433/month for children, would be issued, lifting every American above the poverty line. Digital accounts will enable account holders to transfer money in real time without fees, creating a 21st century public payment infrastructure.
- American Union Jobs would be paid with Treasury Dollar Bills, digital legal tender issued by the US Treasury, and valued at precisely one Federal Reserve Note. Issuance of these digital assets will be statutorily limited to UBI payments, approximately \$4.5 trillion, so that dividends of the economy's growth are shared with all Americans.
- The Social Security Administration would oversee the program, with administration costs under 0.5%.
- The US Postal Service would also be authorized to offer pass-through bank accounts and other basic banking services, just like post offices do in almost every other country, and to have ATMs, where money from a Treasury account could be withdrawn as cash.
- Wages from an American Union Job would not be considered substantial gainful activity for the purposes of SSDI. No cuts to the safety net are included in this legislation. However, it is expected that many welfare programs will atrophy when there is a safety floor under every American.
- To maintain stability in the purchasing power of the dollar, express public policy in the distribution of wealth and income, and address economic costs to our shared natural resources, approximately half the amount of Treasury Dollar Bills would be "clawed back" through new taxes.

- A carbon fee starting at \$20/metric ton is projected to raise \$658 billion over the first four years, while halving America's carbon emissions in 10 years.
- A plastic fee starting with a 20% fee on sales of virgin plastic resin (not recycled), plus a \$.05 fee on individual products, is projected to raise \$428 billion over the first four years.
- A 12% subtraction method value added tax (VAT) would go into effect January 1, 2024, and is projected to raise \$7.26 trillion over the first four years. This is expected to cause a one-time bump in prices.
- Companies may elect to pay a higher VAT rate through voluntary value sharing; the IRS would maintain a public list of these companies and rank the top 200. These funds would be used to pay down the national debt, and then be reissued in Treasury Dollar Bills as a year-end bonus to all Americans.
- In addition, the Child Tax Credit would be repealed, having been replaced by \$5,200 UBI for children, saving an estimated \$482 billion over the first four years.

Other American Union Job benefits:

- American Union insurance would be a public option for health insurance, based on Biden's campaign promise. The penalties on large employers not offering health insurance would be repealed, reducing the regulatory burden on employers while encouraging the de-linking of insurance and employment. Additionally, a requirement to negotiate for Medicare drug prices would be established.
- Funded by a tax on lawyers, a transferable voucher for legal services would be provided to anyone arrested, ensuring universal and immediate access to basic legal knowledge.
- 18 weeks of paid family leave would be offered and paid for by a .25% payroll tax on employees and employers. This is unrelated to American Union Jobs, which are unconditional; only those with additional employment income would be eligible. This is a proven way to reduce the infant mortality rate; bringing America's rate down to the European average would save the lives of 9,000 babies annually.

**Secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, by voting together**

America's children shouldn't inherit 20th century problems – reasonable, rational adults can solve them if they are willing to work and vote together. The American Union of swing voters can bypass the gridlock of Washington by demanding Congress pass this specific plan to end poverty, end mass incarceration, and end the endless wars in 2022. While no one is expected to like every provision included, as a package deal, it will transform our nation. Like a phoenix, America can be reborn after the pandemic as a more just society.

For those willing to opt-in to being part of the solution, the American Union observes a monthly fast for peace in the Gandhian tradition. Members abstain from food while only drinking water for a 24-hour period that falls mostly on the 15th. Dinner-to-dinner fasts are common. (There are medical exemptions for any who need them.) This shared self-sacrifice - #fastforpeace on social media - seizes the moral high ground, as the signers of the Declaration of Independence did by pledging their lives, their fortunes, and sacred honor to bring forth a new nation conceived in liberty.

The American Union is not a political party and does not run candidates. Instead, candidates for Congress compete for our block of swing votes by participating in the monthly #fastforpeace, culminating on October 15, 2022, when all Americans willing to vote together will unite across the country in a fast for peace. Incumbents who join in, and meet our terms by putting this legislation on the President's desk by October 26, will receive the American Union endorsement. Otherwise, endorsement will go to their major party challengers who participated in the fast. Final endorsements will be released one week before the general election, and 3.5% of voters will decide the balance of power in Congress.

The fast for peace is a fast of moral pressure; more than 50 years after his assassination, Martin Luther King Jr.'s triple evils of poverty, racism, and militarism can be addressed with a nonviolent revolution of values.

On October 15, 2022, who will fast for peace?