

Stop Greed Build Green

A Working Class Climate Agenda



The Climate and Community Institute (CCI) is a progressive climate and economy think tank. Our growing staff and network of over 60 academic and expert fellows create and mobilize cutting-edge research at the nexus of inequality and the climate crisis. We fight for a transformational agenda that will rapidly and equitably decarbonize the economy by focusing on material benefits for working people.

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The climate crisis is a core driver of the cost-of-living crisis and instability we see across the economy. Electricity and gas bills are the highest drivers of inflation, rent gouging and skyrocketing insurance premiums are making housing unaffordable, extreme weather is driving food prices up, and the last three summers have been the three hottest on record.¹ And while prices go up, the quality of our health care, goods, and homes is getting worse.² Amidst all of this, billionaires are becoming richer, Big Tech firms are spending trillions on energy-hungry data centers, and a majority of US residents are profoundly disillusioned with the political system.³

Across the political spectrum, there is almost unanimous agreement that something must be done to take on the affordability crisis, but how—or even if—to contend with the climate crisis is far from settled. **Greening the economy is part of the solution.** This means lowering utility bills and home insurance premiums, ending the Big Tech data center land grab, making green appliances from efficient air conditioning to induction stoves affordable, and bringing down costs of union-made electric vehicles while investing in faster buses and trains.

Prior frameworks like the Green New Deal and Build Back Better promised a transformative approach, but they fell short of garnering the political will necessary in a context where inflation took center stage. The Inflation Reduction Act represented the most ambitious federal climate investment in United States history, driving record deployment of clean energy. But it did not deliver tangible benefits to working class voters quickly enough.⁴ And because it delivered slowly,

¹ Scott Horsley, "Electricity Prices Are Rising More Than Twice As Fast As Inflation," *NPR*, August 16, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/08/16/nx-s1-5502671/electricity-bill-high-inflation-ai>; Mark Brennan, Tanaya Srini, and Justin Steil, "High and Dry: Rental Markets After Flooding Disasters," *Urban Affairs Review* 60, no. 6 (April 2024): 1806-1838, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10780874241243355>; Moira Birss, Brendan Mitchell, and Seana O'Shaughnessy, "How the Insurance Crisis Threatens Affordable Housing Development," Climate and Community Institute, April 29, 2024, <https://climateandcommunity.org/research/insurance-affordable-housing/>; Lianne Kolirin, "Extreme Weather Caused by Climate Change is Raising Food Prices Worldwide, Study Says," *CNN*, July 21, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/07/21/business/food-prices-climate-change-intl>; Climate Central, "Heat Season Power Outages," *Climate Matters*, August 21, 2024, <https://www.climatecentral.org/climate-matters/heat-season-power-outages>.

² Kyle Chayka, "The Age of Enshittification," *The New Yorker*, October 1, 2025, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/infinite-scroll/the-age-of-enshittification>.

³ Americans for Tax Fairness, "New Report: U.S. Billionaires Got \$1.5 Trillion Richer in Trump's First Year," Americans for Tax Fairness, January 14, 2026, <https://americansfortaxfairness.org/new-report-u-s-billionaires-got-1-5-trillion-richer-trumps-first-year/>; Ivan Penn and Karen Weise, "Big Tech's A.I. Data Centers Are Driving Up Electricity Bills for Everyone," *The New York Times*, August 14, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/14/business/energy-environment/ai-data-centers-electricity-costs.html>.

⁴ "Read What Joe Biden Said During His Exclusive Interview With USA TODAY: Transcript," *USA Today*, last updated January 8, 2025, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2025/01/08/joe-biden-interview-transcript/77490912007/>; Daniel Aldana Cohen and Thea Riofrancos, "Biden Left Us With a 'Prius Economy.' It's Time for Something Different," *The New York Times*, January 7, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/07/opinion/electric-vehicles-tax-credits.html>.

and at a remove from people's daily experience, it proved structurally fragile: it was largely repealed before most of its benefits had materialized. **The lesson is not that climate investment is politically toxic, but that climate investment designed around long time horizons and indirect benefits will not survive the political cycle.**

Now, President Trump and his billionaire allies have mounted a full-scale assault on climate policy, even as climate-fueled disasters worsen, causing close to \$1 trillion—equivalent to around \$7,000 per household—in annual costs after harm strikes.⁵ What is on offer is not relief, but repression: expanding ICE terror at home, endless conflict abroad, and the gutting of programs like Medicaid and SNAP to pay for billionaire tax cuts.

Climate policies that materially improve the lives of working people are the answer. A Working Class Climate Agenda would quickly relieve the cost-of-living crisis and transform the economy to stem future climate-fueled affordability crises. More importantly, it puts the majority of voters in the driver's seat of economic and climate transformation.

⁵ Bloomberg Intelligence, "The Climate Economy: 2025 Outlook," Bloomberg Finance L.P., June 16, 2025, https://assets.bbhub.io/promo/sites/16/ClimateEconomyDeepDiveFINAL_PRINT.pdf.

The framework: Addressing the cost-of-living and climate crises together

The Working Class Climate Agenda connects climate politics to the economic issues that affect working people and builds the public sector we need. This agenda is rooted in Climate and Community Institute's Green Economic Populism framework, which argues that effective policy interventions are:⁶

Green

They improve working class lives through tangible climate policy—like utility caps and free buses—which cuts carbon pollution and increases resilience.

Economic

They grow working class agency by rapidly lowering costs, breaking up the oligarchy, investing in high-quality public goods, and creating good jobs.

Populist

They build working class power to counter the elites—from fossil fuel firms to home insurance companies—driving climate and economic crises and to manage the transition.

Climate change demands that we work fast and at scale across the economy to address the overlapping crises we face. Delivering on these goals requires:

- **Delivering fast.** Working families need to see immediate improvements in their lives. Past attempts at climate and economic policy relied on investments with longer-term payoffs.⁷ But delivering tangible material benefits—lower bills and better goods and services—quickly is key to building

⁶ Bigger et. al., "Stop Greed, Build Green: A Working Class Climate Strategy," Climate and Community Institute, April 2026, <https://stopgreedbuildgreen.climateandcommunity.org/posts/strategy>.

⁷ "Read What Joe Biden Said During His Exclusive Interview With USA TODAY: Transcript," *USA Today*, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2025/01/08/joe-biden-interview-transcript/7749>.

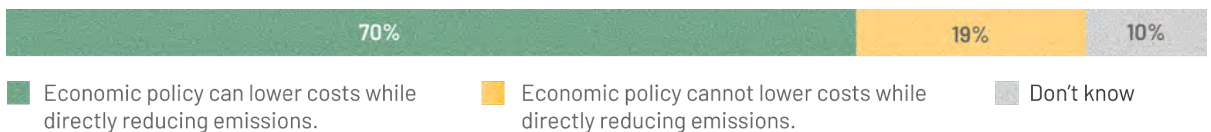
majority support for transformative green investments. This will mean a blend of demand-side interventions, to keep prices down, and supply-side incentives, to drive growth and a green transition.

- **Fighting greed.** Lawmakers must rein in the fossil fuel executives, tech barons, and corporate landlords who exploit and endanger working people. Holding private interests accountable is key to restructuring the economy for public benefit. Naming villains is key to crafting a successful political narrative and targeting those who are responsible for making things worse for everyone.
- **Building the public sector.** The affordability crisis and the climate crisis share causes: an economy organized around extracting short-term returns from housing, energy, transportation, and food systems, at the expense of the working people who depend on them. Solving both requires the same thing: public institutions with the mandate, the financing tools, and the planning authority to build what private markets will not build. And to do so at a cost that private markets cannot match for a purpose that private markets are not structured to serve: to improve people's lives and bring down emissions.
- **Mobilizing massive investments.** The private sector is already spending trillions on AI data centers and industrial expansion, but that capital is flowing toward private returns, not public needs. The demand for climate investments is real, and policymakers should seize the opportunity to shape where that capital goes—toward good jobs, lower costs, and a more resilient economy—especially as the climate crisis increases in magnitude. This means investing in clean new energy, mobility, and industrial systems that serve working class needs as well as new union factories building induction stoves, solar panels, wind turbines, and cheaper EVs.

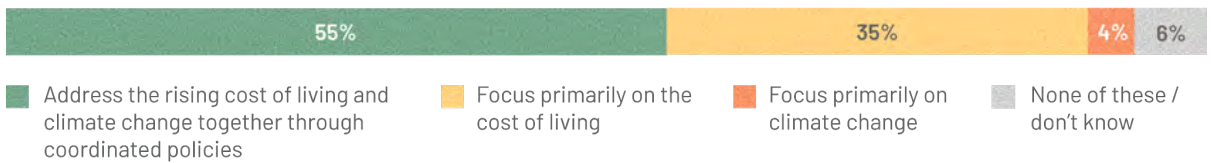
Voters want a Working Class Climate Agenda

Nationally, polls show that the majority of voters want their elected officials to address the climate and cost-of-living crises together—and they believe it is possible:⁸

Which approach comes closer to your view?

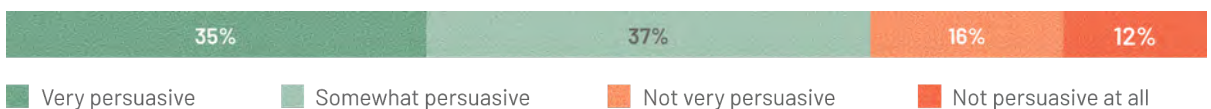


When it comes to the rising cost of living and climate change, which approach would you prefer elected officials to take?



To what extent would you find this statement a persuasive reason to vote for a candidate for elected office?

By helping the public sector invest in climate and economic policies, we will make corporations and the wealthy pay their fair share, speed up the shift to clean energy, create good-paying jobs, and lower energy costs for working families.



- 55 percent of voters say they want elected officials to address the climate crisis and the rising cost of living through coordinated policies, whereas only 35 percent want them to focus primarily on the cost of living.
- 70 percent of voters—including 65% of Republicans—think that economic policy can lower costs while directly reducing emissions.

⁸Data for Progress, "Voters Support a Green Economic Populism Policy Agenda," Data for Progress, April 15, 2026, <https://www.dataforprogress.org/blog/2026/4/15/voters-support-a-green-economic-populism-policy-agenda>.

→ 72 percent of voters find the following statement a “very” or “somewhat” persuasive reason to vote for a candidate running for office: “By helping the public sector invest in climate and economic policies, we will make corporations and the wealthy pay their fair share, speed up the shift to clean energy, create good-paying jobs, and lower energy costs for working families.”

In 2025, state and local elections demonstrated that tying the material impacts of the climate crisis and the cost-of-living crisis together wins elections.

- In **New York City** and **Seattle**: Mayor Zohran Mamdani and Mayor Katie Wilson soared to historic victories by centering the intersection of climate action and everyday concerns, from fast and free buses to renovating public schools for climate resiliency and decarbonized, green social housing.⁹ Now, they are rolling out climate upgrades for public housing, planning to intervene in rate cases, and funding environmental justice organizing.¹⁰
- In **New Jersey**: Governor Mikie Sherrill ran on price controls for electricity against an opponent who was trying to block new clean energy projects. And, on Day 1, she declared a state of emergency to expand clean energy and “froze” utility costs for families.¹¹
- In **Georgia**: Two new public service commissioners, Dr. Alicia Johnson and Peter Hubbard, trounced the Republican incumbent after campaigning on lowering utility bills,

⁹ Gabriel Hetland, “Zohran Mamdani Tackles Climate Change and New York City’s Cost-of-Living Crisis,” *The Nation*, April 22, 2025, <https://www.thenation.com/article/environment/zohran-mamdani-green-schools-plan-climate/>; Katie Wilson, “Affordable and Abundant Housing,” *Wilson for Seattle*, accessed March 23, 2026, <https://www.wilsonforseattle.com/housing>.

¹⁰ “Mayor Mamdani, NYCHA Announce \$38.4 Million Investment to Bring Clean, Reliable Heat Pumps to Beach 41st Street Houses,” *NYC Mayor’s Office* press release, February 4, 2026, <https://www.nyc.gov/mayors-office/news/2026/02/mayor-mamdani-nycha-announce-38-4-million-investment-to-bring->; Hilary Howard, “Floods. Smoke. Soaring Bills. Mamdani’s Climate Czar Has a Full Agenda,” *The New York Times*, February 13, 2026, <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/13/nyregion/mamdani-climate-czar-nyc.html>; Ruby Storey, “City of Seattle Invests in 12 Organizations to Support Projects Led by Communities Hit Hardest by Climate and Environmental Injustice,” *Greenspace* (City of Seattle Office of Sustainability & Environment blog), January 29, 2026, <https://greenspace.seattle.gov/2026/01/city-of-seattle-invests-in-12-organizations-to-support-projects-led-by-communities-hit-hardest-by-climate-and-environmental-injustice/>.

¹¹ State of New Jersey Governor Mikie Sherrill, “Promise Kept: Governor Sherrill Takes Bold Action with Executive Orders Declaring State of Emergency on Utility Costs,” January 20, 2026, <https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/2026/20260120a.shtml>.

increasing clean energy, and imposing greater accountability on Georgia Power, the state's utility.¹²

- In **North Carolina** and **Washington**, voters approved new taxes to fund bike, sidewalk, and public transportation infrastructure.¹³ In **Minnesota**, voters approved a policy to make it easier for tenants to repair homes in the face of negligent landlords, which will pave the way for energy efficiency upgrades.¹⁴

Working class movements are also taking matters into their own hands to advance climate and affordability together, and building new political coalitions in the process.

- In **Chicago**, the Chicago Teachers Union ratified a contract that includes repairs and decarbonization investments, including upgrading HVAC equipment and installing heat pumps.¹⁵
- In **Independence, Missouri**, tenants with a local chapter of Kansas City Tenants went on an eight-month rent strike and won new in-unit electric HVAC systems to replace their gas boilers, with a \$75 monthly utility reduction until repairs were completed, as well as a rent increase cap.¹⁶
- In **Kentucky**, battery workers at the forefront of green innovation voted to unionize with the UAW, ensuring that workers have a powerful voice in the new green economy.¹⁷
- Across **rural Maine**, mobile home park tenants are organizing for rent stabilization and working with the Maine Labor Climate

¹² Alander Rocha and Georgia Recorder, "Democrats Flip Two Seats on the Georgia Public Service Commission," *The Current*, November 4, 2025, <https://thecurrentga.org/2025/11/04/democrats-flip-two-seats-on-the-georgia-public-service-commission/>.

¹³ Caroline King, "Five things to know about the new transit tax in Mecklenburg County," *Spectrum News 1 North Carolina*, November 5, 2025, <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nc/charlotte/news/2025/11/05/transit-tax-mecklenburg-county>; "Transit Funding," City of Ellensburg, accessed April 8, 2025, <https://ci.ellensburg.wa.us/1278/Transit-Funding>.

¹⁴ Peter Passi, "Duluth Renters Prevail in Campaign to Address Delayed Home Repairs," *Duluth News Tribune*, November 4, 2025, <https://www.duluthnewstribune.com/news/local/duluth-renters-prevail-in-campaign-to-address-delayed-home-repairs>.

¹⁵ Nick Limbeck and Lauren Bianchi, "Chicago Teachers Win Greener Schools," *LaborNotes*, April 16, 2025, <https://www.labornotes.org/2025/04/chicago-teachers-win-greener-schools>.

¹⁶ Celisa Calacal, "Independence Towers Tenants End 8-Month-Long Rent Strike After Reaching Deal with New Owner," *KCUR*, June 5, 2025, <https://www.kcur.org/housing-development-section/2025-06-05/independence-towers-tenants-end-8-month-long-rent-strike-after-reaching-deal-with-new-owner>.

¹⁷ Keith Brower Brown, "Battery Workers Organize to Safeguard Their Health," *LaborNotes*, April 20, 2025, <https://labornotes.org/2025/04/battery-workers-organize-safeguard-their-health>.

Council and partners to obtain energy-efficiency improvements to their parks that would slash utility costs.¹⁸

The path forward

The Working Class Climate Agenda is a plan to put working people back in charge of the economy and the climate transition.

Policymakers at all levels of government can apply these goals to sectors ranging from healthcare and manufacturing to energy and housing to help people with all the ways in which life is too expensive. In this section, we highlight how the elements of the framework help policymakers and movements shift power from the wealthy to the working class to simultaneously build a more resilient economy, materially support working people, and address the climate crisis.

Deliver fast

Delivering immediate relief to the working class in the form of lower bills, price caps, and easier lives is good policy and good politics. Simply put, people need relief and they need it now, and delivering tangible benefits to working people creates a broad coalition that will continue to champion the Working Class Climate Agenda.

Examples of delivering immediate material relief:

- **Cap rents and home insurance:** As climate-fueled disasters escalate, insurance companies and landlords are hiking costs. A majority of homeowners say their home insurance costs have increased as insurance executives rearrange their business plans.¹⁹ Meanwhile, corporate landlords are price gouging after disasters and increasing instability.²⁰ Rent and insurance cap policies ensure costs are not unfairly passed onto the consumers with the smallest budgets, prevent corporate price

¹⁸ Andy O'Brien, "Mobile Home Park Residents Fight Private Equity and Fight for Their Homes with Help from Unions," *Maine AFL-CIO*, December 19, 2025, <https://maineaflcio.org/news/mobile-home-park-residents-fight-private-equity-and-fight-their-homes-help>.

¹⁹ Data for Climate Progress and Climate and Community Institute, "Voters Are Ready to Transform Housing With Green Industrial Policy," *Data for Climate Progress* (Substack), August 22, 2025, <https://dataforclimateprogress.substack.com/cp/171658537>; Moira Birss, Sharon Cornelissen, Michael DeLong, Nick Graetz, Douglas Heller, and Ethan Weiland, "Penalized: The Hidden Cost of Credit Score in Homeowners Insurance Premiums," Climate and Community Institute in partnership with Consumer Federation of America, August 2025, <https://climateandcommunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Penalized-Final.pdf>.

²⁰ Jack Flemming, "Rampant Post-Fire Price Gouging Went Unpunished, Report Alleges," *Los Angeles Times*, February 11, 2026, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2026-02-11/rampant-post-fire-price-gouging-went-unpunished-report-alleges>.

gouging after devastating disasters, and create a fairer housing system.

- **Fast and free transit:** One in five adults in the United States experiences transportation insecurity.²¹ Many more are, unfortunately, forced to waste money on car ownership or waste time on long commutes.²² Electric vehicles (EVs) are often too expensive for working class people, and the lack of charging infrastructure makes it difficult to go electric. Direct installation of EV charging stations throughout the country could bring millions more drivers one step closer to a reliable clean energy alternative within a year.²³ At the same time, buses are the most commonly used form of public transit.²⁴ Fast and free buses are already making life better from Albuquerque to Iowa City, and could be quickly expanded elsewhere.²⁵
- **Ban utility shutoffs:** Fears of utility shutoffs mean that in increasingly hot summers, parents are forced to choose between paying for high air conditioning bills or their kids' medicines—all while utility executives get richer.²⁶ The majority (62 percent) of voters blame utility companies for higher electricity bills.²⁷ As Cleveland recently demonstrated, bans on shutting off people's electricity provide an important lifeline,

²¹ Alexandra K. Murphy, Natasha V. Pilkauskas, Nicole Kovski, and Alix Gould-Werth, "How Does Transportation Insecurity Compare and Relate to Other Indicators of Material Hardship in the U.S.?" *Social Indicators Research* 178 (2026): 432-463, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11205-025-03585-y>.

²² United States Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, "The Household Cost of Transportation: Is it Affordable?," *Data Spotlight*, September 19, 2023, <https://www.bts.gov/data-spotlight/household-cost-transportation-it-affordable>; United States Census Bureau, "United States Commuting At A Glance: American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates," *U.S. Census Bureau*, last updated September 22, 2025, <https://www.census.gov/topics/employment/commuting/guidance/acs-1yr.html>.

²³ US Department of Energy, "Procurement and Installation for Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure," *Alternative Fuels Data Center*, accessed March 23, 2026, <https://afdc.energy.gov/fuels/electricity-infrastructure-development>.

²⁴ American Public Transportation Association, *2025 Public Transportation Fact Book*, 76th ed. (Washington, D.C.: American Public Transportation Association, August 2025), authored by Matthew Dickens and Jared Bonina, <https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/APTA-2025-Public-Transportation-Fact-Book.pdf>.

²⁵ City of Albuquerque, "Albuquerque Rapid Transit - ART," *CABQ Transit Services*, accessed March 23, 2026, <https://www.cabq.gov/transit/services/about-albuquerque-rapid-transit>; Cara Buckley, "Iowa City Made Its Buses Free. Traffic Cleared, and So Did the Air," *The New York Times*, November 18, 2025, updated December 10, 2025, https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/18/climate/iowa-city-free-buses.html?unlocked_article_code=1.2U8.fa1n.zyNiRwquSQ_f&smid=url-share.

²⁶ Selah Goodson Bell and Jean Su, "Powerless in the United States: How Corporate Utilities Drive Energy Unaffordability and Climate Chaos," *Center for Biological Diversity*, January 2025, https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/energy-justice/pdfs/Powerless_Report_2025.pdf.

²⁷ Data for Climate Progress and Climate and Community Institute, "Rising Electricity Prices Shouldn't Mean Ripping Off Ratepayers," *Data for Climate Progress* (Substack), October 23, 2025, <https://dataforclimateprogress.substack.com/cp/177588181>.

especially at a time of soaring unaffordability and cuts to federal benefits.²⁸

Fight greed

The government needs to rein in the bad actors who fuel the climate crisis and make life substandard for working class people. This means championing policies that focus on regulating the fossil fuel executives, tech barons, and corporate landlords that extract exorbitant profits at the expense of everyday people.

Examples of holding bad actors accountable:

- **Stop Big Tech's energy-guzzling data center expansion:** Markets and private energy developers are choosing the side of Big Tech, allowing massive electricity price spikes for working people in the process. The rapid expansion of data centers in the United States is expected to increase household utility costs by upwards of 40 percent by 2030.²⁹ Moratoria on data center development can put a check on Big Tech, protecting people from ballooning costs, reducing pressure on the grid, and allowing space and time for more deliberate processes for energy infrastructure development to ensure large-scale physical and financial infrastructure is used for public good.³⁰
- **Fight corporate polluters and make polluters pay:** Big Oil executives have spent decades discrediting climate science to protect their bottom lines and lobbying to prevent climate progress, all while their profit margins grow.³¹ The Trump administration is propping up polluters and gutting environmental regulations at the cost of our health, our planet,

²⁸ "Mayor Bibb Announces 30-Day Moratorium on Utility Disconnections to Support Clevelanders Amid Record-Breaking Federal Shutdown," *City of Cleveland* press release, November 6, 2025, <https://www.clevelandohio.gov/news/mayor-bibb-announces-30-day-moratorium-utility-disconnections-support-clevelanders-amid-record>.

²⁹ Lalit Batra, Deb Harris, George Katsigiannakis, Justin Mackovyak, Himali Parmar, and Maria Scheller, "Rising Current: America's Growing Electricity Demand," ICF, 2025, https://www.icf.com/-/media/files/icf/reports/2025/energy-demand-report-icf-2025_report.pdf.

³⁰ Food & Water Watch, "National Data Center Moratorium Now!," letter to US Congress, December 8, 2025, https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Org-Letter_-_National-Data-Center-Moratorium.pdf.

³¹ Oliver Milman, "Revealed: Exxon Made 'Breathtakingly' Accurate Climate Predictions in 1970s and 80s," *The Guardian*, January 12, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2023/jan/12/exxon-climate-change-global-warming-research>; Hiroko Tabuchi, "In Your Facebook Feed: Oil Industry Pushback Against Biden Climate Plans," *The New York Times*, September 30, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/30/climate/api-exxon-biden-climate-bill.html>; "History-making profits. World-ending emissions," *Energy Profits*, accessed March 23, 2026, <https://energy-profits.org/>.

and our future.³² Corporations must be fought and held accountable via a significantly more robust administrative state that enforces existing laws and enacts new ones designed to benefit and protect working class people. They should also be taxed through policies like climate superfunds—already law in two states—that force the largest emitters to pay their fair share for climate mitigation and adaptation work.³³

- **Tax the rich:** The US tax system enables the ultrawealthy—from tech barons to fossil fuel executives—to accumulate wealth at the expense of collective progress. These billionaires, in turn, spend that wealth on private jets and massive homes that worsen the climate crisis. Taxing the ultrawealthy creates the revenue necessary for everyone to afford a safe life and build the state capacity needed for public goods. This can look like taxing high-end real estate sales to build green social housing and increasing taxes on the ultrawealthy to fund green transportation for all.³⁴
- **Stop the private equity takeover of basic needs:** Profit-hungry firms are buying up utility companies to cash in on the rapid expansion of AI.³⁵ And in the housing market, private equity executives are squeezing mobile home park residents for profit and cutting back on the repairs residents need to withstand extreme weather.³⁶ Policies that prevent the private equity takeover of utility companies and stop runaway

³² United States Senate Committee on the Budget, *One Big Fossil Fuel Handout: Republicans Further Subsidize the Dirty Fossil Fuel Industry*, by Ranking Member Senator Jeff Merkley (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Senate Budget Committee, February 26, 2026), https://www.budget.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/report_one_big_fossil_fuel_handout_republicans_further_subsidize_the_dirty_fossil_fuel_industry.pdf; Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), "White House Watch: Tracking Attacks on Our Environment & Health," NRDC, March 5, 2026, <https://www.nrdc.org/resources/white-house-watch-tracking-attacks-our-environment-health>.

³³ Akielly Hu, "Despite Backlash, More States Are Considering Laws to Make Big Oil Pay for Climate Change," *Grist*, May 19, 2025, <https://grist.org/accountability/climate-superfund-law-maryland-california-vermont-new-york-trump-lawsuits/>.

³⁴ City of Los Angeles Office of Finance, "Real Property Transfer Tax and Measure ULA FAQ," *Los Angeles Office of Finance*, accessed March 23, 2026, <https://finance.lacity.gov/faq/measure-ula>; PwC, "Seattle Adopts Tax on Certain Compensation Exceeding \$1 Million," *PwC US Tax Insights*, April 7, 2025, <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/services/tax/library/pwc-seattle-adopts-tax-on-certain-compensation-exceeding-1-million.html>; *TaxTheRichNY.com*, accessed March 23, 2026, <https://taxtherichny.com/>.

³⁵ Center for Biological Diversity, "Federal Regulators Urged to Reject Blackstone's Bid to Control New Mexico's Energy System," press release, October 24, 2025, <https://biologicaldiversity.org/w/news/press-releases/federal-regulators-urged-to-reject-blackstones-bid-to-control-new-mexicos-energy-system-2025-10-24/>.

³⁶ Private Equity Stakeholder Project, "PESP Private Equity Manufactured Housing Tracker," *PESP*, updated January 2026, <https://pestakeholder.org/pe-sp-private-equity-manufactured-housing-tracker/>; Jacob Kepes and Yuliya Panfil, "Climate Change and Corporate Buy-Ups: A Double Threat to Mobile Home Communities?," *New America*, November 15, 2023, <https://www.newamerica.org/insights/climate-change-and-corporate-buyups/>.

speculation of rental housing would create a fairer and more resilient economy for working people.

Build the public sector

The systematic defunding of government functions that improve the lives of working class people over the last fifty years has contributed to the United States's current economic conditions, not to mention an accelerating climate crisis. Even before Trump's evisceration of the administrative state, the federal government would have needed to *double employment* to meet the ratios we had forty years ago. The government has failed to deliver a quality life for the working class, and rebuilding the state should put high-quality public goods at the center. Achieving economic transformations that lend themselves to just decarbonization will unambiguously require a bigger, more competent state.

Examples of building public sector capacity:

- **Public power:** The majority (62 percent) of voters blame utility companies for higher electricity bills.³⁷ And this makes sense, since electricity bills run by public electricity systems are 13 percent lower than other utility companies.³⁸ We need policies that expand state capacity to run the electric grid from end to end to protect the public from private utility profiteering, such as public power and capitalizing new public finance authorities.³⁹
- **Green social housing:** The market is failing to build and upgrade the millions of homes needed, and policymakers lack a supply-side housing agenda that actually meets the scale and urgency of the housing and climate crises.⁴⁰ The government has largely outsourced housing provision to the private sector,

³⁷ Data for Climate Progress and Climate and Community Institute, "Rising Electricity Prices Shouldn't Mean Ripping Off Ratepayers," <https://dataforclimateprogress.substack.com/cp/177588181>.

³⁸ American Public Power Association, "Stats & Facts," American Public Power Association, accessed March 23, 2026, <https://www.publicpower.org/public-power/stats-and-facts>.

³⁹ Johanna Bozuwa, Thea Riofrancos, Sarah Knuth, Patrick Robbins, Suzy Baker, Kira McDonald, Chelsea Mackin, Daniel Aldana Cohen, Billy Fleming, Nick Graetz, and Neilay Shah, "A New Era of Public Power," Climate and Community Institute, April 2021, <https://climateandcommunity.org/research/a-new-era-of-public-power/>.

⁴⁰ Julia Wagner, Daniel Aldana Cohen, and Ruthy Gourevitch, "Transforming the Housing Sector with Green Industrial Policy," Climate and Community Institute, July 2025, <https://climateandcommunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Transforming-the-Housing-Sector-with-Green-Industrial-Policy-report.pdf>.

relinquishing its coordinating ability to achieve economies of scale in the construction sector and making it harder to lower costs and decarbonize. Instead, the government should commit to building and preserving 10 million units of union-made green social homes in rural, suburban, and urban communities to create a housing system that works for all.⁴¹

- **Universal healthcare, childcare, and eldercare infrastructure:** Healthcare, childcare, and eldercare systems in the United States are crushingly expensive for working class people. As extreme weather disasters strike, the effects of understaffed, underprepared, and privatized care centers have devastating ripple effects. Meanwhile, care work is a low-carbon industry with skyrocketing demand, but child and elder caregivers are underpaid. A comprehensive approach to public health investments like Medicare for All would allow the United States to stabilize household budgets, eliminate medical debt, pay care workers a living wage, and protect communities from the shocks of climate chaos.⁴²
- **Dismantle DHS, build a FEMA that works for all:** By restructuring the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to live outside of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the government could reinvest in and upgrade FEMA to better respond to accelerating climate disasters. By doing so, the government could prioritize preventing extreme weather's worst impacts through collective risk reduction, and radically improve rapid response to disasters. It could also roll out a single-payer disaster insurance to keep both renting and owning a home affordable.⁴³ Funding could be divested and reinvested into this work from other parts of DHS, like ICE and Border Patrol, which are terrorizing immigrants and allies and proving to be historically unpopular.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Gianpaolo Baiocchi, H. Jacob Carlson, Ruthy Gourevitch, and Daniel Aldana Cohen, "Green Social Housing at Scale," Climate and Community Institute, June 2024, <https://climateandcommunity.org/research/green-social-housing-at-scale/>.

⁴² Batul Hassan, Seth J. Prins, Alex Moulton, Sage Ponder, Alyssa Battistoni, and Amanda Novello, "Establishing a Green New Deal Approach to Public Health and Care," Climate and Community Institute, July 2023, <https://climateandcommunity.org/research/gnd-public-health/>.

⁴³ Moira Birss, "Protection or Profit? Transformative Solutions to the Home Insurance Crisis," Climate and Community Institute, October 2025, <https://climateandcommunity.org/research/protection-or-profit/>.

⁴⁴ Domenico Montanaro, "Poll: Two-thirds of Americans Say ICE Has 'Gone Too Far' in Immigration Enforcement," NPR, February 5, 2026, <https://www.npr.org/2026/02/05/nx-s1-5699413/poll-trump-ice-immigration-economy-approval>.

- **Revitalize our public lands and parks:** Years of austerity means that millions of acres of forests on our public lands have been neglected, and public parks nationwide continue to be underfunded.⁴⁵ In the West, these overgrown forests are a key part of the wildfire crisis that is making homes uninsurable, causing damage to water and power infrastructure, harming health, and releasing huge amounts of carbon pollution.⁴⁶ And across the country, public parks and pools are understaffed and undermaintained, leaving working people with little outside space to enjoy their lives. Investing in our public lands and workforce would create thousands of good jobs in forest restoration across the West to create healthier landscapes while reducing wildfire risk, and revitalize leisure across states.⁴⁷

Mobilize investment

The government writes massive checks for destructive wars abroad and ICE terror at home, but offers mere pennies when it comes to investing in homes, schools, utilities, childcare, food, and transportation at the scale that matches the magnitude of the climate and cost-of-living crises. Mobilizing investments toward social goods will stitch together a broad coalition of financiers, project developers, green entrepreneurs, and legacy manufacturers to create millions of high-wage, unionized jobs in sectors from manufacturing to education to childcare, ensuring a transition to an equitable, green economy.

Examples of mobilizing massive investments:

- **Public procurement for clean energy supply chains:** In the same way the government negotiates drug prices with manufacturers, the public sector can enter bulk purchasing agreements to buy, negotiate, and bring down costs of the

⁴⁵ US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, *Wildlife–Habitat Relationships and Conservation Strategies: Making a Difference*, FS-1187h, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, January 2025, https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs_media/fs_document/WCS-making-difference.pdf.

⁴⁶ Patrick Bigger, Micah Elias, Andrew Schuldt, and Sara Nelson, “High Roads to Resilience: Building Equitable Forest Restoration Economies in California and Beyond,” Climate and Community Institute, August 2022, <https://climateandcommunity.org/research/high-roads-to-resilience/>.

⁴⁷ Adriana DiSilvestro, “The Reforestation Trust Fund: Building Capacity for Transformative Forest Service Spending,” Climate and Community Institute, September 27, 2023, <https://climateandcommunity.org/research/blog-reforestation-trust-fund/>.

components needed for a just transition.⁴⁸ UAW Region 6 has charted out how investing in supply chain components for renewable energy controls electricity costs downstream by reducing capital costs for building renewable projects, while creating good-paying union jobs in these industries.⁴⁹ In New York, the state and public housing agency worked together to buy 10,000 induction stoves for low-income residents.⁵⁰ The government could expand this model to EV charging stations, building materials, and other key components of a just transition.

- **Green industrial policies to modernize US industries and workers:** Evident by programs like ARPA-E and the Loan Programs Office, the public sector can effectively support innovation in cutting-edge technologies and large-scale green transition programs. Through a mixture of grants, tax credits, and regulations to help modernize existing US industry, the United States could supercharge a transition to a universally union-built electric vehicle industry and union-made green steel, and use the tools of public finance, public coordination, and procurement to spur the technological development in high-road jobs and union-backed workforces.
- **National home repairs:** More than one in four homes face climate risk, 43 percent of renters need basic repairs like new windows and heating, and homeowners are being saddled with high insurance costs as disasters hit.⁵¹ A large-scale home upgrade program initiated by the public sector, working in partnership with the private sector and building trades, would support people across rural, urban, and suburban

⁴⁸ Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, "Medicare Drug Price Negotiation Program: Selected Drugs and Negotiated Prices," *CMS.gov*, last updated March 16, 2026, <https://www.cms.gov/priorities/medicare-prescription-drug-affordability/overview/medicare-drug-price-negotiation-program/selected-drugs-negotiated-prices>.

⁴⁹ UAW Region 6, with contributions from Isabel Estevez, PhD, "Organize, Industrialize, Decarbonize! A Pro-Worker, Green Industrial Policy for California," UAW Region 6, August 2025, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/660d87225fd47705e02f11bf/t/68ae1f79e596314eed46927a/1756241785971/Req6_whitepaper_25-08-26-web%5B1%5D.pdf.

⁵⁰ New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), "\$32 Million Commitment Announced to Electrify Cooking Appliances in NYCHA Buildings Through Induction Stove Challenge," press release, *NYSERDA.NY.Gov*, November 13, 2025, <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/About/Newsroom/2025-Announcements/2025-11-13-NYPA-NYCHA-and-NYSERDA-Announce-32-Million-Commitment-to-Electrify-Cooking-Appliances>.

⁵¹ "More Than \$12 Trillion in U.S. Homes Face Severe Climate Risks, New Realtor.com® Analysis Finds," *PRNewswire*, September 3, 2025, <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/more-than-12-trillion-in-us-homes-face-severe-climate-risks-new-realtorcom-analysis-finds-302544458.html>; Ruthy Gourevitch, Amneh Minkara, and Rose Monahan, "Tenant Protections and Climate Resilience," Climate and Community Institute and Sierra Club, October 2024, https://climateandcommunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/CCISierra_TenantProtections_final.pdf.

communities. Deploying such a program would also generate jobs for local contractors, electricians, and plumbers, boosting local economic activity and spurring new market-making mechanisms for private investment in clean energy. Models like whole home repair programs and “repair and deduct” policies can lower utility costs, reduce energy consumption, make homes more resilient, and put money back in people’s pockets.⁵²

- **Good transit for all:** To control transportation sector emissions and improve quality of life, the federal government should invest in an ambitious network of high-quality transit options that keep people well connected. A world-class transit system that serves small towns, suburbs, and cities requires an investment comparable to that needed to build the interstate highway system, and will create millions of jobs through infrastructure construction, vehicle manufacturing, and system operation.⁵³ Federal legislation can boost operating support for transit, while also transforming the highway bureaucracy into a federal mobility agency that surges staff to support the fast build-out of transit projects.⁵⁴
- **Public banks:** Public banks are not set up to realize their potential as engines of investment in the United States; instead, questions of investment are relinquished to private banks. The federal government, with its lower cost of capital, should provide seed funding to a new generation of mission-driven public banks in jurisdictions from small towns to the most populous states.⁵⁵ These banks should fill financing gaps that private financiers are too risk-averse or short-termist to fill. They should also drive transformative

⁵² Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development, “COVID-19 ARPA Whole Home Repairs Program,” *DCED.PA.Gov*, accessed March 23, 2026, <https://dced.pa.gov/programs/covid-19-arpa-whole-home-repairs-program/>; Dan Kraker, “Duluth Ballot Initiative Would Allow Tenants to Pay for Repairs And Deduct Costs from Their Rent,” *MPR News*, October 31, 2025, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2025/10/31/duluth-right-to-repair-ballot-initiative>.

⁵³ Transportation for America, “World-Class American Transit,” Transportation for America, January 14, 2026, <https://t4america.org/resource/world-class-transit/>; Emmett Hopkins and Heidi Peltier, “Jobs for More Mobility and Less Mining,” Climate and Community Institute, February 2025, <https://climateandcommunity.org/research/jobs-for-more-mobility-and-less-mining/>.

⁵⁴ Kira McDonald, Emmett Hopkins, and Narayan Gopinathan, “Letting People Move: A Transportation Policy Agenda to Address the Cost of Living and Climate Crises,” Climate and Community Institute, July 2025, <https://climateandcommunity.org/research/letting-people-move/>.

⁵⁵ McMaster University, Public Banking Project, and Climate and Community Institute, “Evidence Brief: Public Banks 101,” Climate and Community Institute, October 2024, <https://climateandcommunity.org/research/public-banks-101/>.

change in underserved communities and offer seed capital for unproven but socially beneficial technologies.

We need a multi-pronged strategy to build the world we need. Some of the economy-wide tools we can use to enact this strategy are:

- **Levy taxes on the ultrawealthy:** Our tax system—from the local to federal level—is regressive, letting the wealthiest off the hook. Transforming our economy requires us to unrig the tax code and ensure the one percent is paying its fair share.
- **Divest and invest:** Spending on war and militarism is a massive drain on public dollars that are much better put toward a massive public investment in climate mitigation and adaptation. From Gaza to Minneapolis, military and violent immigration enforcement activities are inherently destructive.⁵⁶ Policies that divest from terror and invest in the public goods that people deserve can help rebuild the economy for public good.
- **Expand antitrust and antimonopoly enforcement:** Monopolies and global private equity firms are price gouging the working class, skirting environmental laws, and selling low-quality goods that break easily to mandate more consumption. Breaking up the unchecked concentration of corporate power that dominates our housing, energy, transportation, and food systems can create a fairer economy for working people and bring down costs.

⁵⁶ Climate and Community Institute, "Climate Justice Demands Ceasefire and Arms Embargo on Israel," Climate and Community Institute, August 2024, <https://climateandcommunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Palestine-Climate-Justice-2-pager-final.pdf>; Regina Medina, "In Observer Trainings, Visitors Learn from Minnesotans on How to Engage with ICE," *MPR News*, February 27, 2026, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2026/02/27/visitors-learn-from-minnesotans-about-engaging-with-ice-in-observer-trainings>.

Putting the working class in charge of the economy and the climate transition

From coast to coast, communities are fighting back, writing the playbook on how to take control over who the economy works for and how the climate crisis is managed. In the South, unionized battery workers are winning better wages to sustain a better future.⁵⁷ In the Midwest, communities are stopping data centers to save themselves and their neighbors from utility debt and drought.⁵⁸ In rural areas, tenants are winning home repairs and new air conditioning units.⁵⁹ In cities, teachers are pushing for greener and healthier schools for their students.⁶⁰ **From the East Coast to the West Coast, people are banding together to elect leaders championing a Working Class Climate Agenda.**⁶¹

The working class needs to know that elected leaders have their back and are ready to fight for them. This means not just delivering on the agenda above, but also:

- Ensuring that green jobs are good jobs by protecting workers' rights to freely and fairly form a union and bargain together for changes in the workplace.

⁵⁷ UAW, "Battery workers at BlueOval SK in Kentucky File for First Major Union Election in the South in 2025," January 16, 2025, <https://uaw.org/battery-workers-at-blueoval-sk-in-kentucky-file-for-first-major-union-election-in-the-south-in-2025/>.

⁵⁸ Tony Langfellow, "Company Discontinues Possible AI Data Center Project in Greenleaf after Community Backlash," *FOX 11 News*, January 12, 2026, January 12, 2026, last updated January 14, 2026, <https://fox11online.com/news/local/company-discontinues-possible-ai-data-center-project-in-greenleaf-after-community-backlash>.

⁵⁹ Keely Doll, "How Kentucky Renters Are Coming Together to Fight for Better Housing," *Louisville Courier Journal*, February 1, 2026, updated February 4, 2026, <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/local/2026/02/01/kentucky-renters-tenant-unions-fight-better-leases-living-conditions/87684099007/>.

⁶⁰ Labor Network for Sustainability, "How Chicago Teachers Won Green Schools and Climate Justice," Labor Network for Sustainability, accessed March 23, 2026, <https://www.labor4sustainability.org/articles/how-chicago-teachers-won-green-schools-and-climate-justice/>.

⁶¹ Grace Mausser, "Building Municipal Socialism in New York With DSA," *Jacobin*, December 1, 2025, <https://jacobin.com/2025/12/nyc-dsa-mamdani-organizing-strategy>; Hannah Murphy Winter, "How an 'Unknown' Organizer Became Seattle's Next Mayor: 'People Want to See Themselves Reflected in Office,'" *The Guardian*, November 26, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/nov/26/katie-wilson-seattle-mayor>.

- Expanding the right to organize around just working and living conditions standards for workers, tenants, and community members.

Working class people are the core engine of our economy and are the most affected by climate change. A Working Class Climate Agenda centering immediate relief, robust regulation, state capacity, and public investment—paired with these paths to building the political power of the people who would benefit from it the most—can move us from our current state of economic precarity toward a stable, mixed economy that works for everyone. This is a green, new economy—one where the transition to sustainability is the very thing that makes life more affordable and secure for everyone.

It's time to stop greed and build green.