

Advocacy Priorities for 2021

*The Jesuit Conference Office of Justice and Ecology
and the Ignatian Solidarity Network*

In this time of turmoil, amid the fast-rising toll of the coronavirus, growing calls to take long-overdue steps towards racial justice, and the accelerating impact of climate change, we need to return to basic principles. The inviolable dignity of every human being lies at the foundation of our Catholic faith. We share a vision of a society in which all of us, of every race, color and creed, have the opportunity to flourish, with access to quality education and health care, safe communities, good jobs, a safety net for times of hardship, and a healthy environment. We call on the incoming Administration and Congress to work together for the common good, standing in solidarity with all our brothers and sisters, especially those who are most vulnerable.

Environmental Justice

The United States must play a leadership role in addressing environmental challenges that threaten our planet, our security, the health of our families and vulnerable communities at home and around the world. In particular, the U.S. should:

- **Accelerate the transition to clean energy to mitigate climate change.** Through tax credits, incentivize the deployment of green technologies while ensuring a just transition for communities dependent on fossil fuel jobs.
- **Re-enter the Paris climate agreement** and honor pledged contributions to the Green Climate Fund.
- **Return to a regulatory path that is in line with principles of stewardship and justice** by committing to net-zero climate emissions by 2050, and reducing harmful pollution that threatens human health.
- **Invest in sustainable infrastructure for all communities**, particularly in low-income and rural communities, Native communities and communities of color, which have historically been underserved.
- **Provide additional funding to communities most impacted by environmental injustice**, honoring, in particular, federal obligations to Tribal Nations.



Economic Justice

As one of the world's wealthiest countries, the U.S. has both the obligation and opportunity to do much more to end poverty. The ongoing pandemic makes this work even more urgent. We need to rebuild our economy in a way that gives everyone the opportunity to flourish. In particular, the U.S. should:

- **Enact a robust COVID economic recovery package that focuses on those most in need**, including nutrition policies, housing assistance, expansion of refundable tax credits, extension of unemployment benefits and stimulus payments.
- **Reverse regressive tax cuts in favor of a more progressive tax code** that increases rates for those who can afford it and expands refundable credits for low-income families.



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Criminal Justice

With a quarter of the world's incarcerated population, significant obstacles to reentry for those released from prison, and overdependence on police to make up for a lack of mental health and social services in many communities, our criminal justice system is in dire need of significant reform. The U.S. should:

- **Reverse policies that have led to mass incarceration** by ending mandatory minimum sentencing, making sentencing reductions retroactive, and investing in alternatives to incarceration.
- **Enact meaningful police reform that is restorative and community-centered** by developing legal, economic and health policies that address the underlying needs of underserved communities, especially communities of color.
- **Improve reentry** through enhanced programming for returning citizens, facilitating immediate access to safety net programs, and returning the right to vote to those who have been incarcerated.
- **Improve implementation of compassionate release provisions**, including re-entry programming, especially for those vulnerable to COVID.
- **Repeal the death penalty. Stop federal executions.**



Policy Success: Pell Grants Restored to Incarcerated Students. After a 26-year ban, [a provision of the December stimulus package restored Pell grants to incarcerated students.](#)

Migration

Generations of immigrants and refugees have made our country stronger through their ideas, hard work, resilience, and traditions. U.S. policies on immigration and refugee resettlement should recognize their gifts, contributions, and struggles, ensuring justice and protection for all. In particular, the U.S. should:



- **Protect asylum seekers and restore refugee resettlement** by reestablishing access to asylum; rescinding the policies that have dismantled our asylum system, including summary expulsions, the "Remain in Mexico" policy and metering of asylum seekers; rescinding bans on entry to the U.S. from Muslim countries; and rebuilding the US refugee admissions program.
- **Reform border security, interior enforcement, and detention** through increased use of alternatives to detention for those awaiting asylum hearings and greater oversight of immigration enforcement agencies and detention facilities.
- **Enact comprehensive and humane immigration reform**, including a pathway to citizenship for DACA recipients, TPS holders, and DEDs, and safeguarding the family reunification immigration model.
- **Expand COVID relief to all**, regardless of immigration status.
- **Support migrants beyond U.S. borders** by working with regional partners in Latin America to strengthen their asylum systems and address the root causes of migration, including climate change and U.S. trade and foreign policy.



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