



# THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

## Racial, Health, and Economic Equity Overview The Build Back Better Act

### *Fact Sheet*

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The Committee on Ways and Means is investing in programs that help mitigate generations of disparities across racial, economic, gender, and geographic lines. In July 2021, the Committee's Racial Equity Initiative (REI) co-chairs issued a [set of equity-informed recommendations related to infrastructure and budget reconciliation priorities](#) that support more equitable outcomes and inclusive opportunities for all Americans. The Committee on Ways and Means is advancing initiatives for a more equitable society by investing in:

### *Economic Equity*

- Twelve weeks of comprehensive paid family and medical leave for all U.S. workers, including public and private sector workers.
- Initiatives to combat poverty, including cutting child poverty in half by:
  - extending the American Rescue Plan (ARP) expansion of the monthly Child Tax Credit;
  - extending the ARP expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit – one of the largest anti-poverty programs in America – to prevent low-income workers without children from being taxed into poverty; and
  - providing tax credits to help underwrite the costs associated with caring for family members with long-term care needs who wish to remain at home.
- Guaranteeing access to safe, affordable, high-quality child care by:
  - extending the ARP expansion of the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, including making it fully refundable, so that low-income families can access the full value of the credit to afford child care;
  - creating new tools to help parents in finding available child care that meets their needs;
  - building and repairing child care facilities to make child care safer and more widely available; and
  - improving wages for child care and long-term care workers to address economic equity within the care workforce and improve the quality of services and care.
- Support for local communities with an emphasis on the most vulnerable through:
  - expanding the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, the primary federal tool for increasing the supply of affordable housing, including new targeted investments for housing that serves extremely low-income individuals; and
  - expanding proven tax credit programs like the New Markets Tax Credit and Historic Tax Credit that encourage economic investments in communities most in need.



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- Expanded and comprehensive job training initiatives and programs that support all workers, firms, communities, and farmers negatively impacted by international trade, including targeted:
  - outreach in native languages through the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) programs to underserved communities, including communities of color, women- and minority-owned businesses, and producers; and
  - assistance through the TAA programs to provide technical and financial resources, including increased funding for community colleges, to communities experiencing economic distress.
- Expanding access to and enrollment in workplace retirement plans and enhancing tax credits for retirement savings to close the retirement savings gap.

### *Health Equity*

- Increasing the number of physicians, training a new generation of physicians from rural and underserved communities, and reducing longstanding health inequities by incentivizing more physicians to practice in rural and underserved communities.
- Health career pathways for disadvantaged students to pursue health care careers and increase the supply of trained health workers in their communities.
- Expanding access to high-quality affordable health insurance by making investments that will:
  - Close the Medicaid coverage gap and ensure more than two million people have access to quality health insurance coverage at little or no cost;
  - Permanently extend the expanded premium tax credits passed under the ARP, which have already helped bring more than 2.5 million more people health insurance and lowered deductibles for new consumers by 90 percent; and
  - Allow Americans receiving unemployment insurance to receive enhanced ACA premium tax credits to access zero-premium health insurance plans with comprehensive benefits through 2025.
- Initiatives that reduce the high prices of prescription drugs, lower drug prices and out-of-pocket costs for Americans, and cap out-of-pocket costs for Medicare Part D at \$2,000.
- Expanding Medicare coverage to include vision, hearing, and dental services.
- Protecting vulnerable seniors and people living with disabilities to ensure more Americans get the care they need to stay healthy and safe.

### *Environmental Justice*

- Policies that drastically cut carbon emissions to combat the threat of climate change, which has disproportionate impacts on communities of color.
- Targeting solar tax credits specifically at low-income communities, affordable housing, and low-income community solar to lower energy bills and clean up the air.



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- Making clean transportation options more accessible to low-income individuals by:
  - Accelerating deployment of electric busses for schools and transit;
  - Expanding the electric vehicle credit and making it refundable so that low-income consumers can access the full value of the credit;
  - Allowing a new refundable credit for used electric vehicles, which are often the most accessible vehicles to low-income individuals; and
  - Providing a refundable new e-bike credit to expand access to e-bikes for lower-income individuals, who disproportionately rely on bikes to get to work.
- Electrifying commercial vehicles like delivery vans and trash trucks, which are more likely to be located in and contribute to localized air pollution in disadvantaged communities.
- Expanding efficiency incentives for construction and retrofits of multifamily energy-efficient buildings to better direct efficiency savings toward renters.
- Tax credits for colleges and universities to establish or expand environmental justice programs, with an emphasis on schools such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority-Serving Institutions.
- Initiatives to ensure the green workforce of tomorrow has good-paying jobs and training pathways that meet prevailing wage and apprenticeship standards.

## Background on Ways and Means Committee Equity Initiatives

During the 117th Congress, under the leadership of Chairman Richard E. Neal, the Committee on Ways and Means has continued to tackle inequities as root causes of racial, health, and economic disparities. The Committee understands that our nation's future depends on making informed solutions and taking decisive action. From child poverty and lack of access to paid leave, to vulnerability to the changing effects of climate change, to the health inequities COVID-19 highlighted, solutions are urgently needed.

In January 2021, Chairman Neal released an unprecedented framework of legislative priorities, [\*A Bold Vision for a Legislative Path Toward Health and Economic Equity\*](#). This legislative framework built upon the findings in Committee Majority Staff reports: [\*Something Must Change: Inequities in U.S. Policy and Society\*](#) (2021); [\*Children at Risk: The Trump Administration's Waiver of Foster Care Nondiscrimination Requirements\*](#) (2020); and [\*Left Out: Barriers to Health Equity for Rural and Underserved Communities\*](#) (2020), which highlighted ways that implicit bias and racism can undercut efforts to achieve health equity and racial justice.

In March 2021, Chairman Richard E. Neal announced the Racial Equity Initiative, co-led by Reps. Terri A. Sewell (D-AL), Jimmy Gomez (D-CA), and Steven Horsford (D-NV). The REI has helped to refine and enhance the way the Committee understands, reconciles, and remedies pervasive racial inequalities in health and economics.



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### Full and Subcommittee Hearings Examining Issues Impacting Economic, Health, and Racial Inequities (116th and 117th Congresses)

- Leveraging the Tax Code for Infrastructure Investment
- In Their Own Words: Paid Leave, Child Care, and an Economy that Failed Women
- The Disproportionate Impact of COVID-19 on Communities of Color
- The Public Health Consequences and Cost of Gun Violence
- How the Tax Code Subsidizes Hate
- The Economic and Health Consequences of Climate Change
- Overcoming Racial Disparities and Social Determinants in the Maternal Mortality Crisis
- The Global Challenge of Forced Labor in Supply Chains: Strengthening Enforcement and Protecting Workers
- Advancing U.S. Economic Competitiveness, Equity, and Sustainability through Infrastructure Investments
- Reauthorizing Trade Adjustment Assistance: Opportunities for Equitable Access and Modernization
- Universal Paid Leave and Access to Child Care
- Making a Difference for Families and Foster Youth
- Health Profession Opportunity Grants; Past Successes and Future Uses
- Equity in Social Security: In Their Own Words
- Funding Our Nation's Priorities: Reforming the Tax Code's Advantageous Treatment of the Wealthy
- Examining the Impact of the Tax Code on Native American Tribes
- More Cures for More Patients: Overcoming Pharmaceutical Barriers
- Examining the COVID-19 Nursing Home Crisis