



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH  
*POLICY OF THE YEAR NOMINEE*

# 10 IDEAS ECONOMIC *for* DEVELOPMENT

# ROOSEVELT

INSTITUTE | CAMPUS  
NETWORK

## 10 IDEAS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 2013

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**10 IDEAS  
FOR  
ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT**



*Congratulations to*

MICHAEL LEMM

*author of*

STIMULATING ECONOMIC GROWTH IN  
LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES THROUGH FEDERAL  
GRANTS FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

*Nominee for*

POLICY OF THE YEAR

You will see pieces scattered throughout this document that connect directly to the Government By and For Millennial America project, the recent initiative from the Campus Network that projects the values of this generation onto the systems of American government, and seeks to imagine and then build an ideal version of what our government can - and must - be. Marked by this logo,



these pieces represent the sort of ideas that fit within the structure our Millennial vision for government. They are focused and specific plans for change that can make government more innovative, more engaging, and more democratic.

To learn more about the Government By and For project, please visit our website [www.rooseveltcampusnetwork.org](http://www.rooseveltcampusnetwork.org).

## **THE ROOSEVELT INSTITUTE CAMPUS NETWORK**

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# LETTER FROM NEW YORK CITY

**The Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network** was established in 2004 in response to the deep and pervasive sense that young people were overlooked in the policymaking process – that we could put boots on the ground and donate what little money we had to support leaders that promoted our progressive values, but our ideas, opinions, and priorities were not represented in our public discourse or electoral system. It was this realization and subsequent rejection of the status quo that led to the founding of what is now the nation's largest student policy organization.

That original purpose has endured as the Campus Network has grown to over 100 chapters. Yet at a recent gathering, one of our top leaders noted that the challenges we face in the wake of the 2012 election are similar to the ones that first brought us together. We are increasingly powerful actors in our public debates, but despite the bold ideas and ambitious agendas we've envisioned, designed, supported, and fought for, we are still beholden to a political process more focused on scoring partisan points than moving our country forward.

What emerged from that moment of collective reflection was the recognition of our unrealized potential as a movement. While our members' student-generated ideas and solutions-oriented action have redefined youth participation in the political process, it will take constant renewal and commitment to fresh ideas, rigorous engagement, and long-term action to achieve what we know is possible.

The 2013 10 Ideas series represents that ongoing effort to build the infrastructure, communities, and platforms that will allow us to realize the vision that was first laid out in dorm rooms across the country eight years ago. This year, our premier journals represent unique ideas from 83 authors at 30 different schools. As they go to press, our members are already translating those ideas into action by initiating petitions, collaborating with local partners and stakeholders, and lobbying on Capitol Hill.

Last year, we proudly presented the 10 Ideas series as a powerful reminder that this generation is not only willing to build a better future, but has already begun. This year, we put these solutions forward to demonstrate that members of this generation are in it for the long haul as part of an initiative that is always growing, always evolving, and always looking toward the future in the pursuit of progress.

Taylor Jo Isenberg  
National Director  
Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network



# WELCOME

**We are pleased to share** the fifth edition of the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network's flagship 10 Ideas series. These journals, encompassing the best student ideas from our six policy centers, are filled with game-changing public policy suggestions that we can and must implement now.

We are in desperate need of these ideas. Rising healthcare costs, increasing inequality, global climate change, and a government that often seems unable or unwilling to address the things that matter most are challenges that require the very best and the very brightest.

At the same time, we are told that Millennials are checked out, have lost interest, and are waiting for someone else to solve our problems. These journals are an answer to that narrative, making the clear case that we are engaged and active citizens, putting forward ideas to change the problems we see in the world around us. We believe in the power of people working together to solve problems.

Each year, the 10 Ideas journals provide a vision for change that addresses the needs of our neighborhoods, our cities, and our country. Working with community members, local nonprofits, professors, and lawmakers, these student authors have identified the policies that can make the most difference. Yet this journal represents just the tip of the iceberg, with many hours of organizing, researching, fundraising, and developing public campaigns hidden below the surface.

This year's Economic Development journal reveals a common desire to protect the most vulnerable in our society and imagine government as a steward of the common good. Students explore how public goods and institutions, such as transit, Internet access, or affordable housing, have hindered access and opportunity for low-income Americans. Other authors examine how to put regulatory systems in place for problems ranging from predatory lending to the proliferation of carbon in our atmosphere.

Taken on its own, each idea is a simple solution. These journals and the 10 Ideas series taken together are a library of ideas that can help us build toward a more equal, accessible, and community-minded world.

Join us in seeing these ideas realized.

Alan Smith  
Program and Policy Director  
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# REVENUE-NEUTRAL CARBON TAX: A MODEL FOR DE-COUPLING GROWTH AND CARBON EMISSIONS

MIKE HATHAWAY AND AMANDA PURCELL, COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY

*A revenue-neutral carbon tax could play a role in decoupling economic growth from carbon emissions. By instituting such a tax, the United States could make significant steps toward reducing its own emissions while providing a model for other countries to follow.*

Over the past few decades, the United States and the world as a whole have lagged in confronting climate change. According to the scientific consensus, emissions must stabilize at 450 ppm (parts per million) by 2050 to avert catastrophic warming.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, emissions are currently at 391 ppm and accelerating globally at an increasing rate.<sup>2</sup> This demands greater action from all countries to confront this global problem.

A carbon tax provides a possible solution to this problem. By correcting the negative externality imposed by CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (in that the price of goods and services emitting carbon will have to take into account their “external” social cost), the United States will be able to increase economic growth and reduce carbon emissions.<sup>3</sup> This would play an important role in decoupling growth from emissions, which means that even while economic growth continues, carbon emissions are simultaneously reduced. Decoupling comes in two forms: relative decoupling, with relatively fewer emissions per amount of growth, and absolute decoupling, with absolute declines in emissions even as the economy grows. Relative decoupling has been the predominant form for the last two decades; however, absolute decoupling is the key to any sustainable future.<sup>4</sup>

Carbon taxes have been implemented in countries such as South Korea and Australia and in Canadian provinces such as British Columbia. The experience of British Columbia is especially noteworthy due to its revenue neutrality. The British Columbians enacted a carbon tax on the transportation and power generation sectors. The revenue was then used in a “tax-shift” whereby corporate and personal income tax rates were reduced. In the first four years, British Columbia achieved a 15.1 percent reduction in per capita consumption of petroleum products, while consumption in the rest of Canada increased by 1.3 percent.<sup>5</sup> Simultaneously, British Columbia has economically outperformed the rest of Canada, limiting criticisms of carbon taxation’s economic costs.

## KEY FACTS

- A \$20-a-ton carbon tax rising 4 percent a year will result in over \$600 billion in revenue a year by 2050.<sup>3</sup>
- Carbon emissions must stabilize at 450 ppm by 2050. They are currently at 391 ppm and rising rapidly.<sup>1</sup>
- Petroleum usage fell 15.1 percent in British Columbia while rising in the rest of Canada in the first four years of the tax.<sup>10</sup>

## ANALYSIS

Applying such a revenue-neutral carbon tax would enable the U.S. to further decouple its economy and emissions. Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) recently published an analysis based on a tax of \$20 per ton of carbon that rises gradually over time.

Revenue neutrality would be achieved by swapping any increases in revenue with a cut to the payroll tax (a .48 percent reduction in 2015 and a 1.62 percent reduction by 2050) and with the provision of investment tax credits. MIT found that such a policy limited growth in carbon emissions and made the tax code more progressive. The reduction of payroll taxes would offset the regressive impact of carbon taxes on low-income households. Such a policy would also have significant overall economic welfare benefits by 2050. By raising the price of carbon emissions, a carbon tax would encourage companies and individuals to switch their investments toward clean enterprises. Revenue raised from a carbon tax is also less distortionary than payroll taxes, thus enabling gains in long-run economic efficiency and growth. Furthermore, the provision of tax credits would lead to a boom in investment spending.<sup>3</sup>

Critics of a carbon tax often point to the concept of carbon leakage. Carbon leakage is the process whereby higher carbon taxation or cap-and-trade schemes raise energy prices. These higher prices cause industry to be less competitive and consequently to move abroad. The net result of all this is deindustrialization without meaningful reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> at the global level.<sup>6</sup> This problem can be avoided, however, by limiting the encroachment of the carbon tax on extremely energy intensive industries, as is currently done in Australia and the EU.<sup>7</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

As developing countries seek to obtain the same high quality of life enjoyed by the West, emissions will rise to untenable levels. Decoupling is the only solution to this problem. By passing a revenue-neutral carbon tax, the United States can simultaneously provide a model of decoupling growth for other countries to follow. Such a tax would also improve U.S. credibility in future global climate negotiations by showing that it is willing to take action against climate change. Luckily, carbon taxation is one of the few issues that has broad levels of support on both sides of the aisle. Groups as diverse as the Sierra Club and the American Enterprise Institute have come out in support of a carbon tax or at least discussed it.<sup>8</sup> Even Exxon Mobil has expressed support for a carbon tax compared to regulation or cap and trade.<sup>9</sup>

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# AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN A POVERTY-STRICKEN COMMUNITY



KIRSTIE HOSTETTER, UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

*Clarke County, Georgia should offer incentives that encourage rental property owners to offer a portion of existing rental units as affordable housing for low-income families.*

Property owners look to maximize returns on off-campus housing for students attending the University of Georgia, driving up property values and affecting the availability of affordable housing options. UGA provides housing for 7,381 students, leaving 19,190 undergraduates<sup>1</sup> to compete with local residents for housing. In Clarke County, 34.6 percent of residents live below the federal poverty line.<sup>2</sup> A rental vacancy rate of 19.1 percent<sup>3</sup> exists, leaving 23,277 individual rooms vacant.<sup>4</sup> Still, the 42,780 people living below the poverty line do not have the financial resources to rent available rooms. Poor citizens cannot fill the remaining capacity of the housing market on their own. The generally accepted definition of affordability is for a household to pay no more than 30 percent of its annual income on housing.<sup>5</sup> In Clarke County, 66.2 percent of households pay 30 percent or more of their income on gross rent.<sup>6</sup> Only 410 units are available at a rent of less than \$200 and only 643 at a rent of \$200-\$299,<sup>7</sup> leaving few affordable housing options for people with limited means. Clarke County recently received \$1,272,476 in federal funding for programs addressing issues of human development.<sup>8</sup>

## KEY FACTS

- According to the U.S. Census, 35.7 percent of people younger than age 18, or 7,985 children, live below the federal poverty level within Clarke County, GA.<sup>11</sup>
- On January 2, 2013, a cut in discretionary spending took effect that lowered housing and community development spending by an estimated 8.4 percent, affecting over 2 million Americans.<sup>12</sup>
- Athens-Clarke County recently received \$1,272,476 in federal Community Development Block Grants to assist with programs such as affordable housing and poverty reduction.<sup>13</sup>

## ANALYSIS

Permits for expanding services like plumbing or electricity, which cost \$65 dollars per structure plus \$2 per unit,<sup>9</sup> would not be needed for existing structures. Instead, money needed to build affordable housing communities in the future could be used now for incentives covering the difference between what a poor family can pay and the market rate. Property owners experiencing high rental vacancy rates could maintain a source of rent by participating in this policy even if market demand remains low. These payments contribute to total profits, supporting the property owner and the upkeep of rental properties and discouraging the neglect of housing. Lower-income families would provide the owners with income from units that would otherwise provide no revenue in exchange for a safe, stable living environment. The resulting mixed-income housing would also provide positive educational benefits.<sup>10</sup>

Existing affordable housing cannot support the number of low-income families, result-

ing in people living in substandard conditions. This affects overall home values because when people visit the county they frequently see dilapidated structures throughout the area. University students rely on the housing market to provide affordable apartments. Affordable, quality housing for low-income people would not affect university students. An incentives program would contribute to property owners' revenue.

### NEXT STEPS

The Clarke County government should develop an incentive program similar to the Affordable Housing Density Bonus provided by the American Planning Association. This plan outlines steps to developing an incentives-based affordable housing program guaranteeing rental properties as affordable for 30 years. This program could be implemented within the next two years. Following recent federal grants, the department has the money to establish an "Affordable Housing Trust Fund," a set amount of money conservatively invested, which would finance the incentives program. Incentive amounts would be equal to the price of one market-rate unit for each affordable housing unit. Student volunteers interested in urban planning, finance, or related fields of study could volunteer to help with much of the information processing regarding affordable housing applications and property owner compensation. Many departments at the local university offer course credit for this type of service work, benefitting both the program and the student. The government should hold an informational meeting for local property owners explaining the incentives programs in terms of both economic and social benefits to encourage participation. A timeline should be developed for implementation in order to hold all parties accountable for a finished policy by a certain date.

### TALKING POINTS

- An exponentially growing federal deficit has made politicians consider budget cuts in many areas including affordable housing funding.
- Using existing rental units eliminates start-up costs associated with building separate affordable housing structures.
- The Great Recession caused a massive increase in foreclosure rates, resulting in an extreme need for affordable housing.

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# STIMULATING ECONOMIC GROWTH IN LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES THROUGH FEDERAL GRANTS FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

MICHAEL LEMM, CORNELL UNIVERSITY

*As low-income communities continue to fall behind in accessing basic public transportation resources, Congress must provide federal grants for public transit development in these areas to stimulate economic growth.*

In 2011, it was estimated that an average of 36,000 jobs were created for every \$1 billion invested in public transit infrastructure.<sup>1</sup> In turn, every 36,000 jobs created by public transit investments generated nearly \$3.6 billion in private sector sales as well as \$500 million in federal, state, and local tax revenues.<sup>2</sup> The gains from public transportation infrastructure have provided copious benefits for all communities; however, the vast transit disparities between high-income and low-income areas have left low-income families with significant social and economic disadvantages.

## KEY FACTS

- 36,000 jobs are created for every \$1 billion invested in public transit infrastructure.<sup>9</sup>
- Low-income commuters account for the majority of public transportation ridership.<sup>10</sup>
- Public transportation has been proven to stimulate economic growth, increase educational opportunities, and decrease environmental pollution.<sup>11</sup>

To demonstrate how insufficient public transit negatively affects a community, take the example of a household in a low-income urban area located outside the prime job sector of a city. Indeed, this is where analysts argue most public transit resources are underfunded.<sup>3</sup> Among the disadvantages of the household are: 1) decreased travel access to the majority of job opportunities in the city, especially considering that low-income families make up the majority of public transportation users<sup>4</sup>; 2) inferior access to education, as the expansion of charter schools has exacerbated the average daily commute to school; and 3) increased environmental health hazards, as more people are forced to drive carbon-emitting automobiles to work.<sup>5</sup>

## ANALYSIS

The federal government should incentivize state transportation departments to create public transit infrastructure in low-income areas through the use of federal grants. Considering that Congress pledged \$105 billion to investing in public transit infrastructure for fiscal years 2013 and 2014 through the MAP-21 Act,<sup>6</sup> it is imperative to implement federal grants that specifically target low-income public transit development.

In order to understand how the use of federal grants can increase public transportation development in low-income areas, consider the present decisions state transportation departments must make when allocating transit resources. Currently, state governments spend an estimated \$1 of federal funds on public transportation for each dollar collected by local property tax revenues.<sup>7</sup> In deciding where to allocate new public transportation infrastructure, it is more economically efficient for states to pursue projects in higher-

income areas due to the larger tax revenues generated. However, if the federal government assisted state governments by providing block grants for public transportation projects in low-income areas, states would have new incentives to supply such areas with adequate public transit resources. In fact, recent federal grants distributed to states to develop more public housing units in low-income areas through the U.S. Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) have led to the creation of nearly 5.1 million housing units for low-income families.<sup>8</sup>

### NEXT STEPS

With \$105 billion of federal spending pledged to public transportation over the next two fiscal years, low-income communities and state governments can make large gains from the implementation of federal block grants. In order to dissipate the current income wealth gap and help all communities recover from the recent financial crisis, federal grants for public transit development can provide a feasible short-term and long-run solution.

#### TALKING POINTS

- Federal grants will provide states with increased incentives to serve low-income communities' public transit needs.
- Federal grants have been especially effective in stimulating economic development in low-income communities through the CDBG (Community Development Block Grant Program).<sup>12</sup>

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# ELIMINATING ONLINE PAYDAY LOANS

CHRISTINA LUO, TUFTS UNIVERSITY

*Online payday lending must be abolished, as predatory lenders increasingly rely on the Internet to solicit and exploit vulnerable borrowers seeking short-term loans.*

Online payday lending has become an increasingly dangerous form of predatory lending and one that, because of its pervasive and persistent nature, must be eliminated altogether. Deriving its name from the typical two-week loan term, a payday loan refers to a low-amount, short-term loan transacted in stores or online. Because of the short-term nature of these loans, borrowers often cannot meet their terms and take out more loans to make ends meet.

Lenders have increasingly relied on the Internet to solicit payday loans from consumers. Websites and targeted e-mails often omit details like the high interest rates, exploiting consumers' vulnerability and ignorance. Since a few states have begun to regulate storefront payday loans, lenders are resorting to online tactics as a form of interstate commerce, allowing them to circumvent state regulations. Though online lenders often present themselves as compliant with state laws, they strategically locate themselves in states with no regulation. Online lenders are furthermore harmful because they demand personal bank account information for electronic transfers, opening consumers up to the possibility of scams or identity theft.<sup>4</sup>

## KEY FACTS

- On average, a borrower will take out eight payday loans of \$375 per year but spend more than \$520 on interest.<sup>1</sup>
- Online payday loans are typically tacked with Annual Percentage Rates (APRs) between 378 percent and 780 percent; some have reportedly risen as high as 1,095 percent.<sup>2</sup>
- There are currently 28 states that allow payday lending in any form; those 28 states are home to 55 percent of the American population.<sup>3</sup>

## ANALYSIS

Though there has not yet been a comprehensive law regarding payday lending, regulation has occurred on both the state and federal levels. There are 15 states that prohibit payday loans, eight that allow payday loans but have stringent regulations, and 28 that openly allow payday loans. The 15 states that ban payday lending do so by capping APRs, typically at 36 percent, and banning storefronts that offer payday loans. These bans have successfully reduced the number of payday loans taken by consumers in those states, who turn to less exploitative sources of short-term loans.<sup>5</sup>

In 2007, Congress prohibited payday loans with interest rates higher than 36 percent to active military personnel through the bipartisan Military Lending Act. Though the act was generally successful in limiting predatory lending to military personnel, lenders have still managed to exploit the loopholes it contained.<sup>6</sup> More recently, the 2008 Dodd-Frank law allowed the newly created Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) to prohibit loans with terms of less than one month or other loans that consumers are unable to pay, provisions so vague that lenders have easily avoided them.<sup>7</sup>



## NEXT STEPS

As it has become an increasingly lucrative industry, affecting 12 million borrowers who spend \$7.4 billion annually trying to pay back payday loans, it is imperative that payday lending be prohibited.<sup>8</sup> It is not enough for states to simply ban storefronts, as online lending permeates state borders. But because of payday lenders' strong lobbying efforts, it may be more politically viable to enact robust federal regulations instead of a formal ban. Strengthening the CFPB's capacity to regulate the industry would also help to decrease online payday lending.

## TALKING POINTS

- Payday loans prey on consumers looking for a short-term loan, which are affixed with exorbitantly high interest rates but must be paid in a short time period.
- Online payday loans must be eliminated, as e-lenders evade state regulations and continue to squeeze profits from desperate consumers.
- Because lenders demand personal information, online lending also leaves consumers vulnerable to scams and identity theft.

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# PROVIDING BROADBAND INTERNET ACCESS VIA ARKANSAS MUNICIPALITIES



JACOB PORTER, HENDRIX COLLEGE

*Municipal utilities in Arkansas should offer broadband services to foster economic development in critical fields requiring innovative technology.*

Internet connectivity has become essential for economic competitiveness. Unfortunately, Arkansas's connectivity lags behind that of other states. Over one third of Arkansans live in households without Internet access.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Arkansas has the lowest average Internet connection speed of all U.S. states: 3.7 Mbps, compared to the national average of 7.2 Mbps. Nevertheless, prices remain high due to an uncompetitive, oligopolistic Internet service provider (ISP) market.<sup>2</sup> Some of the fastest Internet connections in the United States are in Bristol, VA, Chattanooga, TN, and Lafayette, LA, where municipal governments made the investment to provide Internet service.<sup>3</sup> Chattanooga went from being "a dilapidated city" to a technology hub with an "Amazon.com fulfillment center, major health care and insurance companies and a beehive of tech start-ups that all thrive on big data and super-high-speed Internet."<sup>4</sup> Conversely, the 88th Arkansas General Assembly impeded Arkansas municipalities from distributing broadband. Act 1050 prohibits a government entity from providing, directly or indirectly, "local exchange, voice, data, broadband, video, or wireless telecommunication service."<sup>5</sup> However, a government entity that already owns an electric utility system or television signal distribution system may still provide broadband. There are 15 municipalities in Arkansas, such as Jonesboro and Hope, that satisfy this requirement.<sup>6</sup> Those municipalities should provide broadband, reap the benefits of being a technological hub, and set an example for Arkansas.

## ANALYSIS

If Arkansas municipalities provided broadband, they would make a crucial investment in their economies. One benefit of municipal-provided Internet is increased revenue. Martin County, Florida, with a population of 150,000 living in about 750 square miles (compare to Jonesboro's Craighead County with 100,000 people in 710 square miles), recently began providing broadband and paid \$1.3 million of the capital costs up front.<sup>7</sup> The initiative will be paid for just five years after it was implemented, ultimately saving \$30 million over 20 years compared to leasing connections from AT&T.<sup>8</sup> Chanute, KS, "the hub of Southwest Kansas," with a population of 9,000 and a median household income of just \$32,850 (compare to Hope's population of 10,000 and median income of \$29,000), has a municipal broadband system that generates \$600,000 per year.<sup>9</sup>

### KEY FACTS

- 40-50 percent of primary health care services could be provided through broadband.<sup>14</sup>
- 36 percent of Arkansans live without Internet access.<sup>15</sup>
- Arkansas may increase employment by 0.3 for every 1 percent increase in broadband penetration.<sup>16</sup>

Municipal broadband also brings benefits for local economies. Burgeoning industries such as 3-D printing and cloud computing would be tremendously helped by faster broadband.<sup>10</sup> Quadrupling broadband speed yields a 0.6 percent boost to GDP while

also making possible innovative business models.<sup>11</sup> For each “percentage point increase in broadband penetration in a state,” employment increases by 0.2 to 0.3 percent per year.”<sup>12</sup> These industries will provide jobs; it is just a matter of which communities provide them a niche in which to grow. As a rural state, Arkansas would also gain from broadband’s telehealth opportunities. Approximately 40-50 percent of primary health care delivery could be carried out through telecommunications if the speed was reasonably increased.<sup>13</sup> These advantages and more are enjoyed by citizens and businesses in a small but growing number of American cities. Their examples should be followed in Arkansas.

## NEXT STEPS

Arkansas municipalities, both big and small, stand to gain from offering broadband. Those that currently provide electricity or television ought to take the first step in municipal broadband because they are the only ones able to do so under Act 1050. They could provide it themselves, like they do with other utilities, or form a progressive partnership with a private company, like Kansas City did with Google to create a 1 gigabit connection. Municipal broadband will set an example for other Arkansas municipalities; these municipalities and the Arkansas Municipal League can then lobby the state government to repeal its undue restriction on municipalities.

### TALKING POINTS

- Arkansas ISPs provide the slowest average Internet speed in the country at expensive rates.
- Municipalities in TN and LA have provided broadband like they provide utilities while also generating revenue and increasing the quality of Internet service.
- Businesses with fast broadband connections can participate in innovative methods of production, communication, and data collection, creating many jobs.

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# INCENTIVIZING INVESTMENTS IN OUR COMMUNITY

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Socially driven businesses have become popular with financial investors in recent years. The field of impact investing presents an exciting opportunity for economic development because impact investments are made to socially conscious businesses, usually small or medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), “to generate measurable social and environmental impact alongside a financial return.”<sup>1</sup> The Monitor Group estimates that “the total size of the [impact investing] market could be as big as \$500 billion within the next decade.”<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, these investments have the potential to significantly improve both the economic and social condition of American communities in the next few years.

However, the impact investing industry faces several challenges. Although private firms have attempted to address these problems, the Global Impact Investing Network (GIIN) notes that transaction costs, an absence of infrastructure, and a lack of intermediary services have limited the growth of impact investing and even “threaten [impact investing’s] future trajectory.” To address these issues and enable the industry to reach its full potential, the government should act as a facilitator for impact investments.

## KEY FACTS

- “The total size of the [impact investing] market could be as big as \$500 billion within the next decade.”<sup>2</sup>
- Transaction costs, an absence of infrastructure, and a lack of intermediary services have limited the growth of impact investing in the U.S.

## ANALYSIS

The United States government should look to other countries’ models to incentivize impact investing. In Mauritius, the Impact Exchange (or iX), “a ground-breaking publicly regulated social stock exchange,” is monitored by the country’s Financial Services Commission. This impact investing stock exchange “has been making steady progress” as it has begun to list new companies.<sup>4</sup> The U.S. government should adopt this model and create an independent agency to regulate an American exchange.

According to the founder of Asian Impact Investment Exchange (IIX), a stock exchange would assist these socially conscious businesses by reducing market barriers to impact investing.<sup>5</sup> Thus, by creating an independent agency to regulate an impact investing stock exchange, the government would provide missing infrastructure that would reduce transaction costs and stimulate business growth. The agency can work with already established nonprofit organizations to provide intermediary services and expand the list of financial products. For example, the agency should implement the Global Impact Investing Ratings System (GIIRS), which assesses “the social and environmental impact of companies and funds” to help investors do their due diligence.<sup>5</sup>

The Mauritius iX reveals one weakness in a social stock exchange: it is difficult to convince owners to list their businesses. In order to correct that weakness in iX, the government should implement tax credits for listed companies and lower capital gains taxes for impact investors. These actions would stimulate both demand and supply for the stock

exchange. Overall, this should translate into positive tangible impacts on the environment and community. At the same time, the economy would benefit as businesses grow, create jobs, and produce goods and services.

### NEXT STEPS

Impact investors and socially driven businesses are already poised to shape the world in a positive manner. The federal government should work to break down the barriers between these two parties by creating an independent agency. By regulating an American impact investing stock exchange as well as providing intermediary services based on established systems, this agency would accomplish a worthy goal.

### TALKING POINTS

- Impact investments have the potential to significantly improve both the economic and social condition of American communities in the next few years.
- The Federal Government should take several steps to incentivize impact investing, including analyzing other countries' models.

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# PREVENTING FORECLOSURES:

## STABILIZING THE REGIONAL TAX BASE AND LOCAL REAL ESTATE MARKETS THROUGH PUBLIC FINANCE

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*Through the establishment of a Bridge Loan Trust Fund (BLTF), which would provide credit to homeowners at risk of mortgage default, municipalities can strengthen their tax base while enhancing investment opportunities for the region.*

Homeownership, facilitated through the critical lender-borrower relationship, has defined the way Americans have lived since the 1930s. Depression-era New Deal legislation helped give rise to the 30-year mortgage and provided much needed insurance to investors.<sup>5</sup> As seen in previous credit crunches, homeowners have difficulty gaining access to credit because banks are reluctant to lend.<sup>6</sup> In total, an estimated \$19.2 trillion dollars was lost in household wealth during the recent financial crisis.<sup>7</sup> A Congressional Research Service study found that between 2007 and 2009, 63 percent of households experienced a loss in net worth with a median percentage decline of 45 percent. This reduction was largely attributed to a broad collapse in housing prices.<sup>8</sup> Throughout the same period, the Federal Reserve reported that total U.S. wealth fell by 38.8 percent from housing declines.<sup>9</sup> Falling home values have historically led to contractions in consumer spending, which makes up roughly 70 percent of GDP.<sup>10</sup>

### KEY FACTS

- Home values plummeted 33 percent from their peak in July 2006.<sup>1</sup>
- Approximately 11 million U.S. homeowners owe more on their mortgages than their homes are worth.<sup>2</sup>
- Foreclosure-induced expansion in supply of home inventories can plausibly explain the decline of home values in most areas.<sup>3</sup>
- Reductions in property tax revenue from housing declines disrupt municipalities' ability to provide essential services.<sup>4</sup>

### ANALYSIS

Home values have dropped substantially since 2006. This decline has been multifaceted but has largely been attributed to increased foreclosure rates and lack of access to credit.<sup>11</sup> These homes end up falling into disrepair and adversely affect the neighborhood's appeal.

The model below proposes a public finance apparatus that could be used to offset foreclosures while improving regional real estate price stability:

Bridge Loans, which are commonly used to fund short-term financial obligations, could be used to help homeowners at risk of mortgage default. Establishing a Bridge-Loan Trust Fund (BLTF) would make temporary lines of credit available to homeowners facing economic hardship. The BLTF would be funded by a temporary property tax increase until reaching a \$4 million cap, after which the tax levy would be rolled back. The \$4 million cap used here was meant to serve a town the size of Ithaca and would therefore require rescaling based on the localities' size and discretion.

## NEXT STEPS

Ithaca has approximately 5,274 taxable parcels and total tax revenues of \$17,075,825 in 2011.<sup>12</sup> The town's current tax rate is 13.05<sup>13</sup> percent per \$1,000 of assessed value. Based on median property value, this corresponds to a tax bill of \$2,838<sup>14</sup> per household. By increasing the tax rate to 13.58 percent, or about \$115 per homeowner, the BLTF would grow at a projected \$701,321 annually and reach \$3,613,217<sup>15</sup>, including \$92,512<sup>16</sup> raised from compounded interest payments over five years. The program would initially be funded by first-year tax revenues and remain solvent by annually reallocating interest from the bank.<sup>17</sup> Once fully funded, a total of 301 or 8.4 percent of total owner-occupied housing units, would be eligible to receive loans.<sup>18</sup> The maximum borrowing amount would be capped at \$12,000 or 6 percent of total assessed value of the home, whichever is smaller. The borrower would have five years to pay back the entire loan amount plus 2 percent interest annually. Loan eligibility standards would be determined by the administrative agent. Policymakers should support the development and implementation of a Bridge Loan Trust Fund. Adopting such a model would provide homeowners with a crucial line of credit that would otherwise be unavailable to them in private markets during periods of economic uncertainty. County, state, and federal governments should also inquire about the applicability of such a program at their respective levels of government.

### TALKING POINTS

- Homeowners facing financial distress would have a newfound safety net through public credit.
- Reducing risks associated with market fluctuations would present a unique opportunity for investment in the region and increase tax base stability.
- Interest can be allocated to fund existing public programs, offset administrative costs, or reduce taxes.

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# STRENGTHENING AND BRANDING THE MAINE LOBSTER INDUSTRY

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*By structuring state policy to create a better branding initiative, strengthening state-wide lobster processing infrastructure and effective marketing of the product, Maine lobstermen can feed off the success of Idaho potatoes and expand their distribution by entering new markets.*

The economy of the state of Maine is dependent on the success of the lobster industry. In 2012, the industry was valued at over \$4 billion, or approximately 8 percent of the state's GDP. Furthermore, these numbers do not include the effects that lobster has on tourism, the state's largest industry. Following the approval of the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement, the amount of Canadian lobster entering the U.S. market has greatly expanded. Due to the supply of Canadian lobster in U.S. markets, Maine lobster was certified as a Trade Assistance Product under the Trade Adjustment Assistance for Farmers Act (TAAF) in 2010. Without the money from TAAF, it likely that the Maine lobster industry would be forced to scale down its operations because the industry would no longer be profitable for the fishermen.

Despite the introduction of Canadian lobsters, Maine still dominates the market. Even today, almost 80 percent of all lobster caught off the North Atlantic coast comes from Maine. However, because the cost of the Canadian product is cheaper than that from Maine, restaurants frequently buy the Canadian product to save money. Furthermore, U.S. states like New Hampshire and Massachusetts have laws forbidding the sale of whole lobsters, restricting locations where dealers can sell. As more retailers purchase Canadian lobster, the demand for Maine lobster decreases and the price falls as well.

## KEY FACTS

- The Maine lobster industry makes up 8 percent of the state's GDP.
- 80 percent of the lobster caught in the U.S. comes from Maine.
- Canada currently has 14 more lobster processing plants than Maine.

## ANALYSIS

The Maine lobster industry is the most vital asset of the state economy. Currently there are a few advocacy groups, but they have no official recognition within the state government. Ultimately, the burden of success of the Maine lobster industry falls on the shoulders of the fishermen. The state has worked very hard to develop a variety of measures to ensure the sustainability of the product for years to come. Lobstermen know what size the product must be, and their buoys are registered in a state database so regulators know how much product is being harvested.

Branding efforts have been somewhat successful in the past at informing businesses and tourists about the industry. For example, Linda Bean's Perfect Maine has found success in branding its lobster rolls, which are sold across the state and in Florida. The state has focused on promoting the quality of the product; the word "Maine" implies that the lob-



ster is a superior product.

## NEXT STEPS

The lobster infrastructure in Maine desperately needs improvement, which demands action from the state legislature. It is clear that the Canadian lobster industry is growing and lobstermen in Maine need to find a solution. It is in the state's best interest to be proactive on this issue in order to avoid future problems.

Maine should begin by increasing the number of processing plants in the state. Currently, Maine only has three plants, while Canada has 17. Processing plants prepare lobster for distribution through freezing, which extends shelf life by six months to a year for live lobsters. Restaurants would then purchase more Maine products because their customers know about the quality of the product. Concurrently, the state should establish a more aggressive branding strategy modeled after the Idaho Potato Commission (IPC). The IPC's branding efforts have led to Idaho producing one-third of the nation's potato crop.

### TALKING POINTS

- Adverse agricultural effects from NAFTA have only been discovered recently.
- Idaho has shown that effective branding works. States can follow their lead to sell their products.
- Branding requires little legislative assistance; it just requires the government's support.

While this issue is possible to address on a state level, federal advocacy has also had success. In the summer of 2012, U.S. Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-ME) successfully persuaded both Carnival Cruise Lines and Norwegian Cruise Lines to purchase Maine lobster while their vessels were in Portland harbor. Few cruise line CEOs had realized that the wholesale price of lobster had fallen below that of ground beef, rendering it an economically attractive alternative for their customers and driving demand from both new and returning customers with a higher quality meal offering. Representative Pingree's branding and advocacy demonstrates the potential for the Maine lobster industry to succeed in a global economy.

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# DETERRING THE INFLUENCE OF MONEY IN POLITICS THROUGH TAXATION



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*To limit the excessive amounts of campaign advertisement spending, the government should implement a progressive tax based on the amount of ad time a campaign purchases.*

In the first presidential election since *Citizens United*, politicians spent a total of \$6 billion on getting reelected – an amount equivalent to the state budget of Iowa.<sup>1</sup> This election demonstrated an unprecedented ability for candidates and parties to raise and spend money at the expense of the public interest. Nearly 1 million advertisements inundated the airwaves, with the majority of the trauma falling on the swing states of Ohio, Nevada, Florida, and Virginia.<sup>2</sup> Even more shocking, the two presidential campaigns combined spent \$30 per second to court voters.<sup>3</sup>

Excessive advertising made it easier for many voters to tune them out, reducing effectiveness of the ads.<sup>4</sup> The threat of being outspent forced campaigns to waste a substantial amount of money on these overplayed ads – a trend that is likely to continue as long as mega-donors are willing to open their wallets. The high spending on ads also represents an unfair barrier for smaller campaigns and new candidates who do not yet have the fundraising infrastructure to compete against well-funded opponents. Since the ruling on *Citizens United v. FEC* complicated Congress's ability to regulate the amount people can donate, new methods need to be implemented to decrease the amount of campaign spending.

## KEY FACTS

- Nearly 1 million political advertisements aired during the 2012 presidential election cycle.<sup>7</sup>
- Both presidential campaigns spent a combined \$30 per second to court voters.<sup>8</sup>
- Over \$200 million of Super PAC money came from anonymous donors.<sup>9</sup>

## ANALYSIS

In order to incentivize less campaign spending on advertisements, the U.S. should implement a tax on political advertising. Since the government does not have the power to place quotas on the amount a candidate or Super PAC can spend, a tax incentive to prevent excessive spending on advertising is an effective way to solve this issue. Taking into consideration the needs of smaller campaigns and new candidates as opposed to campaigns funded by mega-donors and Super PACs, the tax would be progressive based on the amount of ad time purchased per cycle. The tax would include any campaign for a political purpose, such as candidates, ballot initiatives, and other voter influence campaigns. For example, the Las Vegas Media Market had over 73,000<sup>5</sup> political advertisements during the 2012 election cycle, at an average rate of \$1,000 per ad spot.<sup>6</sup> The state of Nevada could place a 20 percent tax on any ads candidates and PACs purchase after 500 ad spots per month, a 40 percent tax on ads purchased after 750 spots, and so forth. This tax will make it less worthwhile to spend excessive amounts on TV advertising and will halt the escalating ad war that has become a feature of political campaigns since the *Citizens United v. FEC* ruling. In addition, a progressive tax on advertisements would hamper the efforts of mega-donors and Super PACs, thereby protecting new candidates.

Revenue from the tax would be dedicated to a public finance fund for congressional, state, and local campaigns. This system would be similar to the current presidential public finance system and would benefit the fundraising efforts of smaller campaigns.

## NEXT STEPS

This program would be best implemented at the state level. Since certain swing states are flooded with more campaign money than others, those states would be best able to determine the optimal levels and rates to charge for political advertisements. There are several pathways the measure could take to get passed in a state, but they are all politically difficult. State legislatures would be hampered by partisanship that would motivate each side to produce a biased piece of legislation. A referendum would be fought heavily by Super PACs and other groups that benefit from the current system, demonstrating the clear side effects of money in politics. Regardless, bringing this policy to the attention of voters and lawmakers is the most important step at the moment, because it will spark a conversation about the failure of the current campaign finance system and motivate policymakers to explore creative and viable alternatives.

## TALKING POINTS

- The ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC* allowed for candidates and outside groups to spend unprecedented amounts of money.
- A progressive tax on political advertisements would act as an incentive to reduce the amount campaigns spend on ads.
- A tax on political ads would benefit the public by reducing the amount of political ads and protecting new candidates who do not have the backing of mega-donors.

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# REPLACING THE EMPLOYER HEALTH CARE EXCLUSION FOR A FAIRER HEALTHCARE MARKET

VICTOR ZHAO, CORNELL UNIVERSITY

*Replace the employer health care tax deduction with a premium support plan to reduce health care costs and make the market fairer and more progressive.*

The largest tax expenditure in the current tax code is the tax exclusion for employer-sponsored health insurance, costing about \$260 billion per year.<sup>2</sup> Under the exclusion, employees and employers do not pay income or payroll taxes on health benefits provided by the employer.

Under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) of 2010, new health insurance exchanges will be created and operational by 2014. Plans purchased through these exchanges will be eligible for tax credits that cover a portion of the cost. Furthermore, a new tax will be levied on health insurance plans that exceed \$10,200 for individuals and \$27,500 for families.<sup>1</sup> Plans below these thresholds remain eligible for the tax exclusion.

The health care reforms that Massachusetts initiated in 2006 provide premium support to help low- and middle-income people afford private health insurance policies.<sup>5</sup> These reforms serve as an important case study for the effects of a premium support plan.

## ANALYSIS

Employer spending on health insurance is exempt from taxation as income, which is unfairly regressive and promotes unnecessary health care coverage. Higher-income earners receive a larger tax benefit because they would otherwise have had to pay a larger marginal tax rate on the additional income. Furthermore, higher income workers are more likely to receive insurance and generous health care benefits through their jobs. Uninsured workers are disproportionately young, non-white, less educated, and low wage earners.<sup>6</sup>

A premium support plan that provides a set amount of money to pay for health insurance, equal to the cost of the second-lowest insurance plan in each region, would make the system more progressive. The revenue gained from eliminating the tax exclusion, about \$260 billion a year,<sup>2</sup> could be used to fund the new premium support system. Future increases to the benefit should be calculated based on market and health care inflation.

This would remove the incentive to buy higher-coverage and more expensive insurance plans, because any amount spent above the government subsidy would be taxed as personal income. It would also eliminate the incentive to purchase more care than is really

### KEY FACTS

- 60 percent of Americans under the age of 65 are covered by employer-sponsored health care.<sup>1</sup>
- 91 percent of all private health insurance sold to people younger than 65 is employment-related.<sup>2</sup>
- National health spending totaled \$2.8 trillion, or 17.9 percent of the gross domestic product, in 2012.<sup>3</sup>

needed, driving down overall health insurance costs. Finally, it would expand consumer choice. Workers would no longer have to choose the health insurance plan and defined benefits offered by their employer.

A premium support plan represents a substantial change from current policy and must be approved by Congress. Input and support from the health care and insurance industries is critical. In contrast to current policy, which is unfairly regressive, the plan would redistribute income to lower- and middle-income Americans. Measures already enacted under the PPACA, such as health insurance exchanges that aim to provide universal access to quality, affordable care regardless of preexisting conditions, will mitigate the impact on workers who currently receive generous health insurance plans from their employers. More expensive health insurance plans are also generally tied to higher-paying jobs, so those most affected by this plan are likely to be those who can afford better health insurance.

#### TALKING POINTS

- The current system of employer-provided health insurance is unfairly regressive and benefits higher-income earners.
- Premium support, rather than employer-provided health care, allows the individual to choose which insurance policy to purchase and reduces wasted care, ultimately driving down costs.
- Health care costs are growing at 1.5 times the rate of GDP.<sup>4</sup>

#### NEXT STEPS

The first step in a transition to premium support is already under way, with the PPACA set to be fully implemented by 2014. Under the PPACA, health insurance exchanges will be set up in each state, offering plans to low- and middle-income earners that are eligible for tax credits.

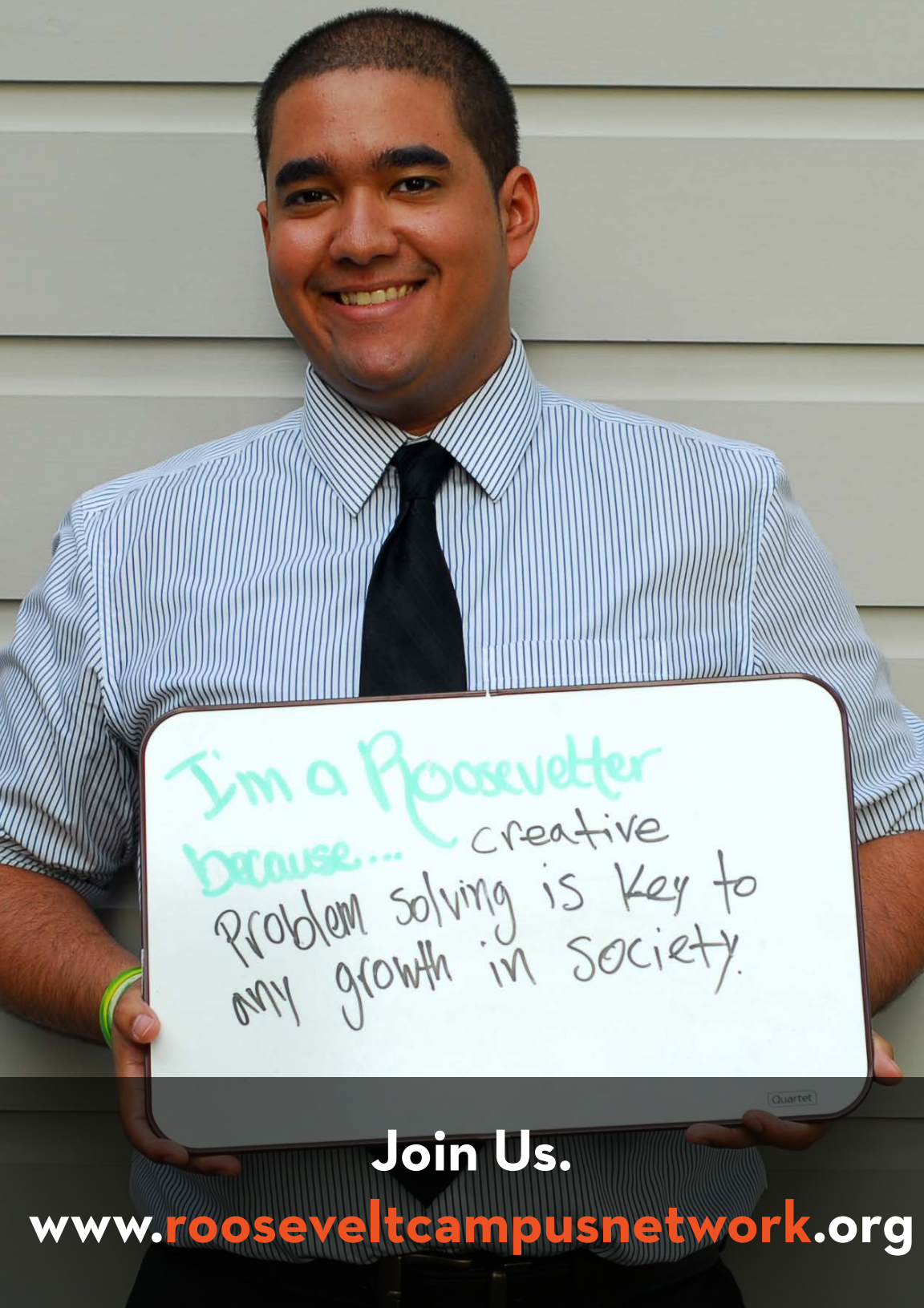
A two-year transition period should follow in order to prepare for a full transition to a premium support system and give policyholders time to make necessary adjustments to their insurance plans. During this period, the health insurance exchanges should make preparations for the expected increase in customers when a premium support plan is fully implemented.

By 2016, the tax exclusion for employer-provided health insurance should be completely eliminated and a full transition to a premium support plan should be underway.

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STUDENT VOTING IN SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS  
*POLICY OF THE YEAR NOMINEE*

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*Congratulations to*  
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CIVICS IN CONTEXT:  
STUDENT VOTING IN  
SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS

*Nominee for*  
POLICY OF THE YEAR

You will see pieces scattered throughout this document that connect directly to the Government By and For Millennial America project, the recent initiative from the Campus Network that projects the values of this generation onto the systems of American government, and seeks to imagine and then build an ideal version of what our government can - and must - be. Marked by this logo,



these pieces represent the sort of ideas that fit within the structure our Millennial vision for government. They are focused and specific plans for change that can make government more innovative, more engaging, and more democratic.

To learn more about the Government By and For project, please visit our website [www.rooseveltcampusnetwork.org](http://www.rooseveltcampusnetwork.org).

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# LETTER FROM NEW YORK CITY

**The Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network** was established in 2004 in response to the deep and pervasive sense that young people were overlooked in the policymaking process – that we could put boots on the ground and donate what little money we had to support leaders that promoted our progressive values, but our ideas, opinions, and priorities were not represented in our public discourse or electoral system. It was this realization and subsequent rejection of the status quo that led to the founding of what is now the nation's largest student policy organization.

That original purpose has endured as the Campus Network has grown to over 100 chapters. Yet at a recent gathering, one of our top leaders noted that the challenges we face in the wake of the 2012 election are similar to the ones that first brought us together. We are increasingly powerful actors in our public debates, but despite the bold ideas and ambitious agendas we've envisioned, designed, supported, and fought for, we are still beholden to a political process more focused on scoring partisan points than moving our country forward.

What emerged from that moment of collective reflection was the recognition of our unrealized potential as a movement. While our members' student-generated ideas and solutions-oriented action have redefined youth participation in the political process, it will take constant renewal and commitment to fresh ideas, rigorous engagement, and long-term action to achieve what we know is possible.

The 2013 10 Ideas series represents that ongoing effort to build the infrastructure, communities, and platforms that will allow us to realize the vision that was first laid out in dorm rooms across the country eight years ago. This year, our premier journals represent unique ideas from 83 authors at 30 different schools. As they go to press, our members are already translating those ideas into action by initiating petitions, collaborating with local partners and stakeholders, and lobbying on Capitol Hill.

Last year, we proudly presented the 10 Ideas series as a powerful reminder that this generation is not only willing to build a better future, but has already begun. This year, we put these solutions forward to demonstrate that members of this generation are in it for the long haul as part of an initiative that is always growing, always evolving, and always looking toward the future in the pursuit of progress.

Taylor Jo Isenberg  
National Director  
Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network



# WELCOME

**We are pleased to share** the fifth edition of the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network's flagship 10 Ideas series. These journals, encompassing the best student ideas from our six policy centers, are filled with game-changing public policy suggestions that we can and must implement now.

We are in desperate need of these ideas. Rising healthcare costs, increasing inequality, global climate change, and a government that often seems unable or unwilling to address the things that matter most are challenges that require the very best and the very brightest.

At the same time, we are told that Millennials are checked out, have lost interest, and are waiting for someone else to solve our problems. These journals are an answer to that narrative, making the clear case that we are engaged and active citizens, putting forward ideas to change the problems we see in the world around us. We believe in the power of people working together to solve problems.

Each year, the 10 Ideas journals provide a vision for change that addresses the needs of our neighborhoods, our cities, and our country. Working with community members, local nonprofits, professors, and lawmakers, these student authors have identified the policies that can make the most difference. Yet this journal represents just the tip of the iceberg, with many hours of organizing, researching, fundraising, and developing public campaigns hidden below the surface.

This year's Education journal reveals both the problems with our current education system and Millennial ideals for what education could be. Students seek to improve educational opportunities in underserved communities through afterschool programs, teacher training, and cultural engagement. Other pieces look to education as an opportunity to engage students in our democratic process, connecting the system back to the need for well-rounded citizens in any democracy.

Taken on its own, each idea is a simple solution. These journals and the 10 Ideas series taken together are a library of ideas that can help us build toward a more equal, accessible, and community-minded world.

Join us in seeing these ideas realized.

Alan Smith  
Program and Policy Director  
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# RESTRUCTURING PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING IN NORTH CAROLINA

IOAN BOLOHAN - UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL

*To ensure that adequate funding is available to all schools in the state, North Carolina should shift from a flat grant appropriations approach to the foundation funding model.*

Despite its importance, there is no standard for school system financing in the United States and several models are in effect throughout the country.<sup>1</sup> North Carolina's flat grant funding structure provides state aid for some of its school systems' basic costs but leaves much of the additional financing burden on local populations, relying on district property taxes to support education.<sup>2</sup> Geographic socioeconomic differences lead to inequalities in the resources available to schools, resulting in inadequate funding and disparities in educational opportunities for students. This poses significant obstacles for low-income districts.<sup>3</sup>

## KEY FACTS

- North Carolina had a per pupil expenditure of \$8,451 in 2009-2010,<sup>7</sup> 20 percent below the national average.<sup>3</sup>
- Among districts in North Carolina, inequality in school financing, as measured by standard deviation in funding, was 8.4 percent in 2010<sup>3</sup> compared to about 4 percent for states using foundation funding systems.<sup>5</sup>
- According to 8th grade test scores, nine of the ten states with the smallest achievement gaps use foundation funding systems.<sup>6</sup>

Instead of using flat grants, North Carolina should implement the foundation finance model and join the 38 states already employing this funding structure.<sup>4</sup> This approach defines the cost of educating each student in the state and sets a minimum tax rate for supporting schools in all districts. Local tax revenue is then combined with adjusted state contributions to meet the foundation spending level for each student, ensuring sufficient funds to establish quality schools.<sup>5</sup> States employing this system, such as Texas, Ohio, and Massachusetts, have less inequality among districts, smaller achievement gaps, and higher test scores.<sup>6</sup>

## ANALYSIS

Foundation funding would have varied implications for local districts. Currently, North Carolina's state government contributes about \$5,162 for every student—roughly 62 percent of the average per pupil expenditure in the state—leaving 22 percent to be paid by districts on average.<sup>7</sup> By mandating a minimum local tax rate, wealthier school systems—those collecting more than the foundation amount through minimal taxation—that receive financial aid under the flat grant structure would stop benefitting from state support, freeing funds for use in low-income districts incapable of generating sufficient revenue to finance education. This makes state allocations more efficient and, at the 2010 level of spending per student, the shift to the foundation system leads to a projected savings of about 5 percent, or \$420 per pupil, and over \$592 million in total.<sup>5,7</sup> Foundation funding also addresses the needs of school systems by accounting for local capacity, based on the total value of taxable property, and effort, measured by additional edu-

cation taxes. This allows districts to set tax rates above the minimum requirement and use the resulting extra funding to augment the foundation amount for higher spending levels.<sup>8</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

Before reforms can be instituted, officials must project each district's potential for meeting local tax requirements as well as the sustainability of such measures. Current supplemental funding for specific educational initiatives such as English as a second language, academically gifted, and special needs programs should be maintained, and a gradual reduction in flat grants must take place to ease school districts into the foundation funding system.<sup>9</sup> Over time, the foundation level can be raised until a balance in spending per student is reached between state and local governments and each district has established a tax rate equilibrium designed to support desired per pupil expenditures at the local level. Additionally, legislation should include mechanisms tied to inflation to adjust the foundation amount and allow for continued support at the level required to provide quality education to students across the state.<sup>10</sup> Measures of district finance equality should also be used to ensure effective implementation. Together, these steps allow for increased education spending, reduced inequalities between districts, and overall bolstered scholastic achievement for North Carolina's schools.

### TALKING POINTS

- Foundation funding helps increase equality in education spending across districts<sup>5</sup> and ensures that adequate support is available for students in all school systems.<sup>10</sup>
- Switching from a flat grant system to the foundation funding model would save North Carolina over \$592 million and allow for local districts to steadily increase total education spending.<sup>5,7</sup>
- Wealthy districts with high income tax bases that receive reduced state funding could supplement education spending with other finances while low-income districts receive state benefits until reaching the foundation level.<sup>8</sup>

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# REFRAMING DISCIPLINE IN AMERICAN SCHOOLS

KATY BULLARD, TUFTS UNIVERSITY

*Congress should ban corporal punishment in schools in favor of nonviolent alternatives.*

In schools, corporal punishment often takes the form of beating and paddling as punishment for both minor infractions (such as chewing gum, tardiness, and dress code violations) and more serious behavior (such as fighting).<sup>1,2</sup> The Eighth Amendment protects inmates from violence in prisons. American students, however, are not afforded the same protection. In *Ingraham v. Wright* (1977), the Supreme Court ruled that neither the cruel and unusual punishment clause nor the right to due process should be applied to corporal punishment in public schools,<sup>3</sup> and corporal punishment remains legal in 19 American states.<sup>4</sup> The American school system is at a critical juncture, as school violence and academic underachievement threaten the wellbeing and competitiveness of American students. A nation-wide ban on corporal punishment is necessary for our students' success.

## ANALYSIS

While intended to improve student behavior, corporal punishment instead humiliates students and teaches violence as an acceptable way to solve problems.<sup>5</sup> Thus, school corporal punishment leads to higher rates of school violence, domestic violence, and incarceration.<sup>6</sup> It also weakens students' academic engagement and attendance. As former Assistant Surgeon General Dr. Daniel F. Whiteside explained, "corporal punishment of children actually interferes with the process of learning and with their optimal development as socially responsible adults."<sup>7</sup> Nonviolent practices – including mediation, peer courts, clearer expectations for behavior, and restorative practices – have been successfully implemented in American schools of various demographics. Two years after implementing peer courts, suspensions at Davidson Middle School in California dropped by more than 90 percent.<sup>8,9,10</sup> Requiring teacher training in positive disciplinary practices as part of the accreditation process for education schools would cost little for state and federal governments. Training in restorative practices for current teachers and school administrators could also be incorporated into professional development with minimal cost. Currently, schools may be sued for students' physical injuries, and the medical treatment sought by tens of thousands of students annually incurs additional costs. Additionally, the costs of lost economic productivity from dropouts are enormous, costing \$8 billion annually in public services.<sup>11</sup> Training in nonviolent disciplinary practices would improve attendance and school achievement, lessening these costs.

## KEY FACTS

- In the 2006-2007 school year, at least 223,190 American students received physical punishment; accounting for unreported incidents, this number could be as high as three million.<sup>13</sup> The same year, 10,000-20,000 students sought treatment for injuries resulting from punishment at school.<sup>14</sup>
- The Society for Adolescent Medicine found severe medical dangers associated with corporal punishment, including whiplash, hemorrhaging, and blood clotting.<sup>15</sup>
- Corporal punishment in schools results in reduced school achievement, greater absenteeism, and higher dropout rates.<sup>16,17</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

School violence and academic underachievement cannot be tackled as long as students' fundamental dignity and safety remain at risk. Congress should move immediately to ban school corporal punishment. All new teachers should be required to undergo training in positive disciplinary practices as part of the certification process. Accreditation for education schools should require training in positive discipline. Accredited schools should demonstrate to the Departments of Education and Justice that training in positive discipline has been incorporated into their programs no later than July 2014. Alternative certification and teacher entry programs should incorporate these trainings by July 2016.

Federal and state-level departments of education, justice, and health should fund these training programs for existing teachers and school officials together. Pediatric, psychological, and education specialists should be engaged in the design and implementation of training programs, modeled after successful programs in City Springs Elementary/Middle School (Baltimore, MD), Christian Fenger Academy High School (Chicago, IL), and Davidson Middle School (San Rafael, CA), among others.<sup>12</sup> Experts may be drawn from such organizations as the Center for Effective Discipline and the International Institute for Restorative Practices.

### TALKING POINTS

- Incidents of school violence, including school shooting deaths, are more frequent in states where school corporal punishment is legal.<sup>18</sup>
- The indirect costs of school corporal punishment are significant, including costs associated with medical care, lawsuits, higher incarceration rates, and reduced economic productivity due to higher dropout rates.<sup>19</sup>
- Corporal punishment encourages psychological and behavioral problems and increases incidences of violence. Nonviolent practices are more effective for discipline than physical punishments.
- In allowing students to be subject to corporal punishment, the U.S. is denying the basic rights and dignity of American children.

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# CIVICS IN CONTEXT: STUDENT VOTING IN SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS

TATIANA ELDORÉ - MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE



*Washington State should promote youth civic engagement and increase the accountability of lawmakers by permitting students 16 and older to vote in local school board elections.*

Students across Washington State learn according to decisions made by publicly elected school board members, yet a majority of students have no control in the selection process. Board members develop policies that influence everything from budgets to lunch menus, but despite this significant decision making influence on student life, only students 18 years and older can vote to choose their leaders. In response, the late State Senator Scott White introduced SB 5621 in 2011, which proposed that students 14 years and older should be able to vote in “school board elections for the district in which they are enrolled and in good standing.”<sup>1</sup> While the bill is retained as of 2012,<sup>2</sup> it lacks a sponsor, and its chances of passing are low.

## KEY FACTS

- One study found that voting in one election year raises the probability of voting in the next election year by 46.7 percent.<sup>11</sup>
- Washington school board elections take place exclusively in odd numbered years, which consistently see lower voter turnout rates: only 52.9 percent of registered voters in Washington returned ballots in 2011,<sup>12</sup> compared to 81.2 percent in 2012.<sup>13</sup>
- An estimated 1,040,000 students attend public school in Washington State.<sup>14</sup>

States may determine minimum voting ages for non-federal elections.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, Washington should set its voting age at 16 for state school board elections. The Washington Student Achievement Council, which issues statewide graduation requirements, mandates three years of social studies,<sup>4</sup> ensuring that students will be prepared to make educated voting decisions. Voter registration forms in Washington require verification either with the last four digits of the registrant’s Social Security number or a valid driver’s license number,<sup>5</sup> so combining registration with licensure at Driver’s Licensing Offices (DLOs) would simplify voter registration and make it easily accessible.

## ANALYSIS

Costs associated with creating and distributing a separate ballot would be contained. Running polling center elections in Pierce County in 2009 cost approximately \$25 per voter in the primary election and \$4.27 in the general election—figures that were, according to the Secretary of State, “much higher than the vote by mail average.”<sup>6</sup> Washington switched to a universal vote by mail system in 2011, and no cost comparison data yet exists. However, costs in Oregon, the only other universal vote by mail state, decreased from \$3.07 to \$2.21 per voter in the six years after the last polling center elections.<sup>7</sup>

When given the opportunity, young people will vote. In the 2008 general election, 84 percent of registered youth ages 18-29 voted.<sup>8</sup> Data suggests that one-time voters are more likely to vote in future elections, implying that voting may be habit-forming.<sup>9,10</sup> Fos-

tering student participation in the democratic process at a young age will further ensure that youth political engagement remains strong in Washington for decades to come.

Empowering student voices in school board elections will also increase board member responsiveness. While many school boards, including those of three largest districts of Seattle, Tacoma, and Spokane, have created advisory programs composed of students to gain input on their concerns, boards are not required to implement or even consider student ideas. Allowing students to vote would encourage these officials to listen more closely to these young constituents, creating policies in line with the opinions of those directly affected.

#### TALKING POINTS

- By voting in school board elections, students could experience the democratic process and develop the habit of voting at a young age.
- Allowing students to vote in school board elections would inspire further accountability in board members to the student populations that they serve.
- *Oregon v. Mitchell* (1970) allows states to set their own minimum voting ages in state elections.<sup>15</sup>

On a practical level, Washington should create two ballots – one with complete election material and one with only school board election material – and check ballot distribution against birthdates of registered voters. Since Washington votes by mail, student voters are unlikely to accidentally receive full ballots.

#### NEXT STEPS

Washington policymakers should pass an amended SB 5621 to adjust the school board voting age to 16 and then create an amendment to the state constitution stating this provision.

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# **SPEEDY AND STANDARDIZED LICENSING: THE INCENTIVE TO INNOVATE**

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*American research universities should implement standardized, express licensing agreements specific to their campuses and provide researchers with greater autonomy in choosing licensing agents.*

Universities have long been hubs of innovation in the fields of science and technology due to their research and human capital resources. For example, Stanford filed for more than 300 patents in 2003, and approximately 150 MIT-based companies are founded each year.<sup>1</sup> This symbiotic relationship between universities and innovation was recognized and reinforced in the Bayh-Dole Act of 1980. The act allowed universities to claim title to inventions resulting from federally funded research, which incentivized universities to encourage inventors within the system to bring their product to market.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the initial success of the Bayh-Dole Act in fostering commercialization, the current inefficient negotiation of licensing agreements stifles innovation. Each invention is handled on a non-standardized, case-by-case basis, resulting in a prolonged negotiation process that significantly delays commercialization and ultimately deters inventors from the outset.<sup>3</sup>

## **ANALYSIS**

At most universities, licensing can take upward of several months.<sup>4</sup> Each inventor must negotiate royalty rates, mergers, initial public offerings (IPOs), asset sales, and stock sales with the university on a case-by-case basis. However, an express licensing agreement such as the one implemented in 2009 at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) addresses the Bayh-Dole Act's failure to create a speedy negotiation process. The express licensing agreement outlines pre-negotiated terms and sets standardized royalty rates for the products.<sup>5</sup> One successful example is that of Synereca, which completed the negotiation and legal processes and received its license in less than one business week under the UNC-CH model.<sup>6</sup> By significantly shortening the time and resources needed for commercialization, the UNC-CH express license would ultimately address a failure in the universities' implementation of the Bayh-Dole Act.

### **KEY FACTS**

- The average commercialization process requires multiple steps and involves disclosing the invention, record keeping and management, patent prosecution, negotiation and drafting licensing agreements, and managing licenses.<sup>7</sup>
- Under current policies, licensing can take several months to negotiate and execute.<sup>8</sup>
- UNC-CH's Express Licensing Agreement can issue a license in as little as one business week.<sup>9</sup>

## **NEXT STEPS**

Like the UNC-CH model, a predetermined and standardized licensing agreement would be implemented by the technology transfer offices. Expansion of the model could be-



gin with innovation hubs such as Southern California and Boston. Given the diverse research cultures at each university, each would host a panel of entrepreneurs, university researchers, and legal representatives that would assist in drafting the agreement on a university-by-university basis. The licensing process would be evaluated periodically to remain current with university and industry standards. Also, the offices of technology transfers would have resources to facilitate, but not force, contracts between licensing agents and the researchers. Lastly, an evaluation protocol would be put in place, led by the offices of technology transfer, which would monitor the progress of the start-ups and projects.

#### TALKING POINTS

- Under most university protocols, each invention is handled on a case-by-case basis, resulting in a prolonged negotiation process that delays commercialization and deters inventors from the outset.
- Under the UNC-CH model, faculty members would be allowed to choose their own licensing agents instead of relying on the universities. An “express licensing agreement” would outline the obligations of the faculty members and outline set royalty rates on the products.

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# A SECOND WAVE: EXTENDED-DAY ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS FOR LOW-INCOME SCHOOLS

CAYLEY HELLER, CORNELL UNIVERSITY

*The New York City Department of Education should fund extended-day programming at low-income schools to provide enrichment activities and address the income achievement gap.*

A recent study found that the achievement gap between high- and low-income students has increased by about 40 percent since the 1960s.<sup>1</sup> This widening gap is a threat to the American values of opportunity, mobility, and equality. Further, most low-income households lack the educational and financial resources to support their children's education through homework help and extracurricular activities.<sup>2</sup> Thus, New York City should fund extended-day programming at low-income schools to provide students with access to homework help and enrichment activities.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 addresses the widening income achievement gap by creating accountability mandates. Under NCLB, students take standardized exams and schools are held accountable for the results through threats of reduced funding. NCLB's mandates led some schools, especially low-income schools, to eliminate recess or enrichment programs in favor of additional classroom time.<sup>3,4,5</sup>

Much of the income achievement gap is driven by the fact that lower-income households generally have lower levels of education and fewer financial resources than affluent households.

Parents with lower educational attainment often find it more difficult to help their children with homework, which is significant given the 50 percent increase in homework among elementary school students from 1980 to 2000.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, fewer financial resources means that lower-income households invest less in extracurricular activities. Extended-day programming at low-income schools would help overcome these obstacles by providing such opportunities.

## ANALYSIS

A recent study found that students who participated in afterschool programs had more positive attitudes toward school, higher educational aspirations, better attendance rates, fewer disciplinary issues, lower dropout rates, and greater levels of engagement.<sup>7</sup> For example, 80 percent of students surveyed at New York City's Beacon Community Center felt they finished their homework more often and 75 percent reported better grades in school because of the center's afterschool program.<sup>8,9</sup> Also, research shows that 46 percent of students not currently enrolled in NYC's afterschool programs would likely participate if there were programs in their community.<sup>10</sup>

### KEY FACTS

- The gap in standardized test scores between high- and low-income students has grown by about 40 percent since the 1960s.
- Participation rates in after-school programs vary as a function of socioeconomic status.
- Of students surveyed from NYC Beacon Centers, 75 percent feel they get better grades in school.

Apart from academics and social skills, afterschool programming helps quell juvenile delinquency by keeping students supervised for a longer period of time. Supervised programs keep students off the streets and reduce their potential for drug use.

### NEXT STEPS

The NYC Department of Education should fund extended-day enrichment programming in low-income schools. The goals of extended-day programs should be to offer enrichment activities and educational services to complement students' academic learning. These programs should provide access to extracurricular activities, such as math clubs, sports, chess, tutoring, and photography. Specifically, the programming should emphasize homework help, art, and music programs that schools may have reduced or eliminated.

To fund and staff these programs, NYC should encourage partnerships between the programs, local universities, and community organizations. For example, college students could become involved through student teaching, internships, and mentoring.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, national mentoring programs, such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, could provide staff and training on how to create a friendly and well-supervised afterschool environment.

### TALKING POINTS

- The increasing income achievement gap is a threat to American ideals.
- Afterschool program participants report better performance in school, develop better social skills, and benefit from the “safe haven effect” through reduced crime and lower levels of drug use.
- The NYC Department of Education should fund extended-day enrichment programming to address the income achievement gap.

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# PRACTICAL LEGAL EDUCATION: MAKING AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS RELEVANT

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*To increase awareness of laws that impact the daily lives of citizens, the New York City Department of Education should implement a practical legal education program for K-12.*

A citizen's lack of knowledge of a law does not excuse his or her liability for breaking the law. This is the legal principle of *ignorantia juris non excusat*, Latin for "ignorance is no excuse." However, the United States lacks a comprehensive legal education program to help citizens understand the laws and legal rights applicable to daily life. The number of laws enforced in the United States steadily increases each year. For example, in 2012, 40,000 new laws were enacted.<sup>1</sup> Most laws are complex and use legal terminology that only lawyers and other legal professionals can understand. Thus, public knowledge about the law and legal rights is low.<sup>2</sup>

New York State law requires public schools to teach at least two hours of civics a week. Still, the current New York civics curriculum focuses more on the functions of government and the bill of rights than on the laws that students encounter every day.<sup>3</sup> Street Law, a program based in Washington, DC, teaches public school students across the country about the laws relevant to their daily lives, including contract law, housing law, criminal law, police procedures, employment law, and consumer protection law.<sup>4</sup>

## ANALYSIS

Practical legal education afterschool programs help ensure that students understand their legal obligations and rights. Additionally, understanding the origins and purposes of laws allows students to develop constructive relationships with systems of authority and to improve their perceptions of the legal system. These positive influences could ultimately lead to a decline in preventable convictions.<sup>4</sup>

An innovation of this nature could also have a favorable influence on students academically and socially by piquing their interest and raising their academic achievement. Studies show that youth legal education programs improve academic participation, increase student enthusiasm for school, and build a sense of self-sufficiency. For example, Teens, Crime and Community (TCC), a program that includes law-related education in urban areas, found effective changes in delinquents' attitudes to authority figures and

## KEY FACTS

- A legal education program for 5th and 6th graders in a suburban New York District significantly increased students' positive attitudes towards and knowledge of the justice system.<sup>8,9</sup>
- A recent study showed that knowledge of the law has a beneficial impact on the behavioral development of 2nd through 6th graders.<sup>13</sup>
- A legal education curriculum created by Project STATUS (Student Training Through Urban Strategies) in a High School in Pasadena, CA successfully increased academic achievement and reduced delinquent behavior.<sup>14</sup>

for urban students toward pro-social norms.<sup>5</sup>

To fund these legal education afterschool programs, the NYC Department of Education should seek supplemental funding from the federal government and sponsorships from local law firms. The NYC Department of Education should partner with the Skadden Arps legal program at City College and the New York Bar Association<sup>6</sup> to implement this program and provide internship credit and scholarships to college students who volunteer as teachers.

### NEXT STEPS

The NYC Department of Education should implement a comprehensive afterschool program that allows students to learn the law and solve and avoid potential legal problems. This program should focus on teaching students the laws they are most likely to encounter in their everyday adult lives. To supplement this program, the New York State Legislature and the NYC Department of Education should collaborate to produce and circulate simplified versions of laws for all citizens. Simplifying laws facilitates general public understanding and will help students contextualize their relevant legal requirements.<sup>7,10,11,12</sup>

### TALKING POINTS

- Most K-12 students are not proficient in civics or the law.<sup>15</sup>
- Laws are often written in complex legal jargon that mostly lawyers and other legal professionals are able to understand.<sup>16</sup>
- A practical legal education afterschool program could increase academic engagement, build social skills, raise legal awareness, and increase positive interactions with law enforcement.<sup>17,18,19,20</sup>
- By implementing a legal education program, New York City can work to prevent potential legal problems and convictions that students might face in adulthood.<sup>21,22</sup>

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# INTEGRATION OF ETHNIC STUDIES PROGRAMS INTO SOUTH BRONX HIGH SCHOOLS

EVELYN MARTINEZ, MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE

*Ethnic Studies programs should be incorporated into academics to ensure that minority students are reflected in and engaged with what they are learning.*

Discourses of deficiency and failure concerning Latina/o student populations in the U.S. do not acknowledge the reasons why these “underachieving” minority students have difficulty engaging with their education. Current classroom textbooks disregard the scholarship of and by ethnic and racial minorities and over represent Euro-American historical narratives.<sup>1</sup> One of the poorest districts in New York City, the South Bronx, is 72 percent Hispanic,<sup>2</sup> yet 48.3 percent have less than a high school diploma or GED equivalent.<sup>3</sup> Latina/o students want their experiences and their communities’ social contributions to be acknowledged—they need positive historical and social representations of themselves in their curriculum.

South Bronx public high schools should establish Ethnic Studies Programs with departments in Chicana/o Studies, Caribbean Studies, Asian American Studies and African American and African Studies to offer culturally relevant classes focused on historic and contemporary social contributions of minority groups in the U.S. The Mexican American Studies (MAS) program, an Ethnic Studies Program in the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD), demonstrates the potential benefits of inclusive and representative courses like Chicana/o Studies because the curriculum fosters positive understanding and appreciation from non-Latina/o and non-Mexican American students by addressing students’ attitudes concerning their own distinct racial and ethnic identities.<sup>4</sup> Both Latina/o and non-Latina/o students gain role models and learn how to think critically about how history is constructed—skills critical for college readiness.<sup>5</sup> TUSD graduation rates and student achievement scores demonstrate the benefits of ethnic studies: In 2010, students who took MAS courses graduated at almost a 94 percent rate compared to the 83 percent rate of students who did not take MAS courses.<sup>6</sup> The continual growth of ethnic studies programs would help eliminate disparities in dropout rates, detention rates, special education, grade retention, college acceptances, enrollment in Advanced Placement classes, and college retention rates.<sup>7</sup>

## KEY FACTS

- Overall, Mexican American students are less likely to complete high school, pursue higher education, and graduate with a college degree relative to peers from other racial/ethnic groups.<sup>8</sup>
- In 2007, compared to all other races/ethnicities in New York City’s five boroughs, Hispanics in the Bronx had the lowest graduation rates.<sup>9</sup>

## ANALYSIS

The New York City Department of Education’s “Raising the Bar” initiative gives generous grants to schools that demonstrate highly effective education reform.<sup>12</sup> Since “Raising the Bar” also replaces failing schools,<sup>13</sup> it should design new curricula with Ethnic Studies Programs to complement these new schools. Ethnic Studies Programs would be piloted

in 25 Bronx high schools (approximately 17,000 students) that received a C, D, or F in the 2011-2012 Progress Report Results.<sup>14</sup> Most of the costs of this program would be covered by the “Raising the Bar” program and through regular funding.

## NEXT STEPS

To guarantee extensive impact, communication and collaboration between students, staff, school administrators, students, families, and community members is crucial to make Chicana/o Studies an approved use of “Raising the Bar” funds. Teachers would be trained to use a multidisciplinary pedagogy, create safe classroom environments, and encourage students to be civically engaged citizens and critical consumers of knowledge. Long-term investments in students, teachers, and ethnic studies programs will be recovered through an exponential growth of minority students entering and graduating from college, thereby contributing to economic vitality.

### TALKING POINTS

- Through high-level thinking, students focus on issues that they, as Latinas/os and non-Latinas/os alike, face in their schools and communities regarding government and policy.<sup>10</sup>
- Students taking a MAS course during their senior year were more likely to graduate than seniors who did not.<sup>11</sup>

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# SUPPORTING RURAL EDUCATION BY RELIEVING STUDENT LOANS

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*To persuade qualified teachers to work in rural school districts teaching honors-level courses, Missouri should implement a teacher loan repayment program.*

Public high schools, specifically those in Missouri, face an urban-rural achievement gap.<sup>1</sup> Many rural schools lack an adequate selection of honors-level courses, such as AP and college credit classes. Additionally, teachers at rural schools are often not qualified to teach honors-level courses because Missouri requires teachers of college credit classes to have Masters degrees and prefers that AP teachers also have Masters degrees.<sup>2</sup>

To increase the number of qualified teachers and honors-level courses in rural schools, Missouri should implement a loan repayment program that provides tax credits or loan reimbursements for qualified, honors-level teachers who teach in rural schools.

In Missouri, 67 percent of school districts are rural.<sup>3</sup> Most schools require teachers for honors-level courses to have a Masters degree.<sup>4</sup> But only one-third of teachers in rural school districts nationally have graduate degrees, compared to half of teachers in urban schools.<sup>5</sup> To compound this problem, teachers are often less attracted to teaching in a rural school district because of geographic isolation, lower salaries, and additional classes and extracurricular activities.<sup>6</sup>

## ANALYSIS

Honors-level courses provide many educational benefits for students. A study of New York and Florida schools found that taking college credit classes increased a student's likelihood of graduating from high school, enrolling full-time in a four-year college, and completing college on time. Also, students who take college credit classes often have higher college GPAs than their peers.<sup>7</sup> Learning from teachers with graduate-level and specialized degrees also provides educational benefits. For example, students whose teachers are certified and hold graduate degrees in math and science have higher test scores in those areas.<sup>8</sup>

### KEY FACTS

- 387,581 Missouri students, approximately 43 percent of the student population, live in rural areas.<sup>11</sup>
- Rural schools are less likely to offer college credit and AP classes as compared to urban and suburban schools (37 percent compared to 53-63 percent).<sup>12</sup>
- Students who take college credit courses tend to have higher GPAs in high school and college.<sup>13</sup>

These academic benefits suggest that Missouri should implement more honors-level courses taught by qualified teachers throughout the state. However, because rural schools have the strongest need for these courses and teachers, a program to attract and reward qualified, honors-level teachers should focus first on rural schools.

Forty-three percent of Missouri's students reside in rural areas and small towns.<sup>9</sup> These students would directly benefit from a program designed to attract highly qualified



teachers and honors courses to rural schools. Additionally, graduate students who teach in rural Missouri would directly benefit from the loan repayment program's tax credits or reimbursements. The state legislature, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and local school boards would be the government bodies responsible for creating, funding, and administering the loan repayment program.

### NEXT STEPS

Missouri should implement a teacher loan repayment program to attract highly qualified teachers to teach honors-level courses in rural public schools. The program would provide a tax credit or reimbursement to these teachers for each year they teach an honors-level course in a rural school.

The program would be similar to the Opportunity Maine Program, which provides a tax credit to graduates of Maine colleges who accept jobs in the state. This tax credit helps cover the cost of student loan payments. The Opportunity Maine Program expects a financial net benefit of \$30 million per year, as it encourages more college graduates to remain in the state.<sup>10</sup>

### TALKING POINTS

- Missouri faces a rural-urban learning gap because rural schools offer fewer honors-level classes and employ less qualified teachers than their urban counterparts.<sup>14</sup>
- A loan repayment program for highly qualified teachers who teach honors-level courses in rural public schools will attract teachers to rural schools and increase the number of honors-level courses offered.
- A loan repayment program will support rural education, relieve teachers' student loan debt, and have a positive impact on students and Missouri's economy.

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# EXPANDED ACCESS TO TUTORING TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

MARK SELBACH, AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

*To improve the academic performance of its middle school students, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) should expand quality tutoring opportunities by providing access to the ASSISTments software program.*

DCPS is an education system in crisis. Only 22 percent of DCPS students in forth grade scored “proficient” or higher in math on the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), an assessment of student academic achievement conducted by the U.S. Department of Education.<sup>1</sup> Academic achievement levels, particularly for at-risk students, frequently decline in the transition from elementary to middle school.<sup>2</sup> DCPS data reflects this trend. While only 22 percent of fourth graders in DCPS scored “proficient” or “advanced” for math on the 2011 NAEP, even fewer (17 percent) of eighth graders did.<sup>3</sup> Greater access to quality tutoring during these middle school years should help DCPS raise its students’ academic performance.

In 1984, a landmark paper published by the University of Chicago demonstrated that individual tutoring is a far more effective tool for learning than conventional classroom instruction.<sup>4</sup> The paper’s authors ran experiments showing that the tutored students on average outperformed 98 percent of students who were not tutored.<sup>5</sup> Since 1975, Higher Achievement, a rigorous individualized tutoring program for students in grades five through eight that operates in DC, Baltimore, Richmond, and Pittsburgh, has seen its participants increase their GPAs by an average of one letter grade by the end of their middle school years.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, tutoring is an invaluable tool in helping students achieve their academic potential.

## KEY FACTS

- Less than 17 percent of DCPS eighth grade students test “proficient” in math.<sup>15</sup>
- Tutored students can raise their GPA by one letter grade.<sup>16</sup>
- Professional tutors can charge as much as \$400 an hour.<sup>17</sup>

Unfortunately, hiring a professional tutor is prohibitively expensive for lower-income families, as some tutors can charge up to \$400 an hour.<sup>7</sup> For many families with children in DCPS, professional tutoring is unaffordable, with over 72 percent of the students in DCPS qualifying for free and reduced lunch.<sup>8</sup> Students and families need an alternative to these expensive private tutors.

## ANALYSIS

ASSISTments, a computerized tutoring program developed at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in collaboration with Carnegie Mellon University, incorporates common techniques used by teachers and tutors to assist students in their homework and additional schoolwork.<sup>9</sup> ASSISTments offers hints to move students in the right direction on assigned work while also incorporating automatic feedback to teachers so they can identify which students need additional assistance with the work in class.<sup>10</sup> In addition, the program’s developers are working on an upgrade that allows the software to recognize

and respond to students' emotions (such as boredom or frustration) while doing work."<sup>11</sup>

ASSISTments is already used by schools across the United States, including nearly 10,000 public school students in Maine.<sup>12</sup> A randomized controlled trial found that, on average, students who used the program raised their performance in math by a full letter grade compared to students who did not use the program.<sup>13</sup>

#### TALKING POINTS

- The ASSISTments program can provide low-income students with access to quality tutoring services.
- District of Columbia Public Schools can obtain ASSISTments free of charge.
- DCPS can partner with the library system to provide ASSISTments on library computers so all students have access.

The developers of ASSISTments do not charge school systems for their software.<sup>14</sup> The challenge of expanding student access to the program is ensuring that all students, regardless of socio-economic status, have access to a computer with ASSISTments software so they can complete assigned homework and supplementary classroom work.

#### NEXT STEPS

In order for every student to use the program, DCPS will have to devise a way for all students to have access to a computer. Firstly, DCPS can provide access to the program for every student with a home computer or laptop. In addition, DCPS could partner with the District of Columbia Public Library system to provide ASSISTments on the computers available in their facilities for students who do not have access to a personal computer at home.

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# THE “2-2-2” PROGRAM: IMPROVING DUAL ENROLLMENT IN VIRGINIA

ABHINAV TYAGARAJAN, NAOMI FIERRO, SHIN-YI LEE, MICHAEL DONNAY  
AND SHIVA JAYARAMAN. GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

*The “2-2-2” program can help increase college accessibility and affordability for low-income students in Virginia.*

Low-income students continually face challenges accessing higher education in the United States, including lower rates of academic preparation and college affordability. Current traditional dual enrollment programs like those in Virginia and Florida allow high school students to enroll in courses in a local community college and earn college credit, thus acclimating students to a more rigorous college curriculum while saving them money. To improve this concurrent enrollment model, Virginia should develop a “2-2-2” program in which students can dual enroll for two years at a community college while in high school, directly matriculate for two years of community college after high school, and finish their degree with two years at a traditional four-year college or university.

## ANALYSIS

Research shows that students, especially those from low-income households, graduate high school and attend college at far higher rates when concurrently enrolled in a community college during high school.<sup>1</sup> Higher education that spans six years like the “2-2-2” program gives students additional time to develop the necessary skills to complete a bachelor’s degree, which are often underdeveloped for low-income or ESL students.<sup>2</sup> Thus, it would significantly help lower the achievement gap between lower and high-income students.

The “2-2-2” program is grounded in the success of current dual enrollment programs.<sup>3</sup> Studies of Virginia’s transfer articulation agreements (dual enrollment courses taken during high school that fully transfer to community college) have shown that it has dramatically reduced college expenses and has increased the likelihood that students enroll in a degree program and graduate.<sup>4</sup> The “2-2-2” program improves the Virginia model by seamlessly integrating disparate segments into one cohesive program. Given that Virginia’s high school dropout rate is 6.5 percent and its community college retention rate is 42 percent, combining dual-enrollment agreements and transfer articulation agreements into one concrete program could help improve student retention.<sup>5</sup> By easing the transition between high school and college fiscally, administratively, and academically, the continuous nature of the “2-2-2” program encourages enrollment and retention of low-income students. The program would also lessen the financial burden on low-income students, as the average community college costs \$8,734 per year while the average four-year school costs \$21,657.<sup>6</sup> In addition to the

### KEY FACTS

- Virginia’s community college re-tention rate is 42 percent.<sup>9</sup>
- Virginia’s high school dropout rate is 6.5 percent.<sup>10</sup>
- Dual enrolled students earn 15.1 more credits on average than their non-dual enrolled peers.<sup>11</sup>
- The average community college costs \$8,734 per year while the average four-year school costs \$21,657.<sup>12</sup>

lower cost, students will directly benefit by having a streamlined program in which they will have automatic admission to a four-year university.

This plan could help reduce financial aid expenditures, as students would spend less time at more expensive four-year schools. Individual school districts or states like Virginia could continue to fund dual-enrolled students at existing levels. Since this program would merely create a streamlined set of transfer agreements between schools, the financial burden to state governments should not be significantly more than current spending.<sup>7</sup>

### TALKING POINTS

- The “2-2-2” program integrates disparate segments of the Virginia model into one cohesive program.
- Students can seamlessly transition from high school to two years of community college and then to two years at a four-year university.
- The program will encourage college enrollment among low-income students by easing the transition between high school and college fiscally, administratively, and academically.

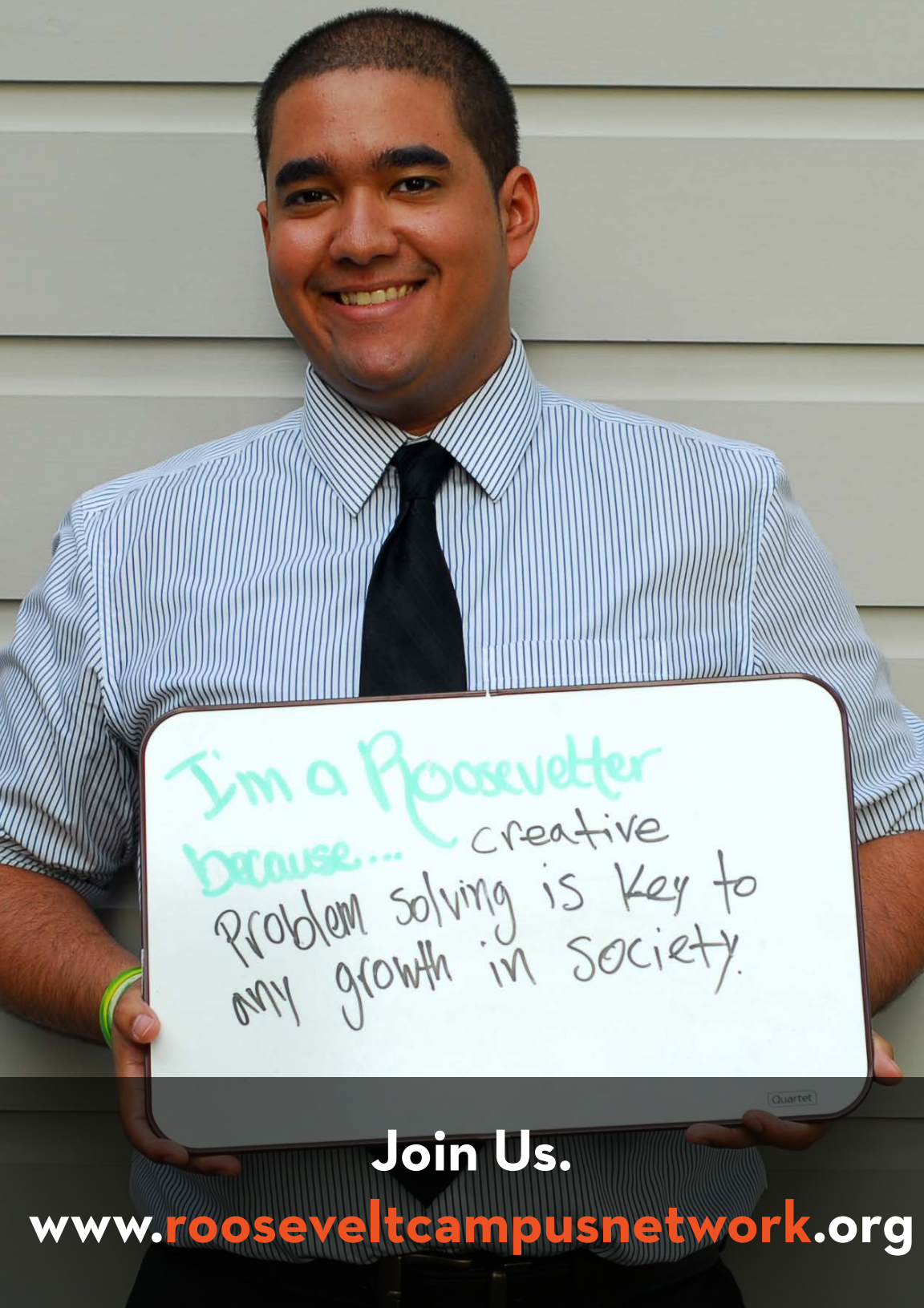
## NEXT STEPS

With its record of success in dual enrollment, Virginia should pass a proposal that creates a statewide “2-2-2” program through the state legislature. To do this, Virginia would need to get legislators in its general assembly to pass legislation supporting the creation of this program. In terms of implementing the program, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia must work with the Virginia Community College System to jointly administer and coordinate it. Ideally, if the program is a success, the policy could be scaled up by creating a federal incentive grant program. The distribution of federal aid to states and universities would help defray the administrative costs of running these programs.<sup>8</sup> By improving the Virginia model and using it as a benchmark for success, states can save money while making education more affordable and accessible for all.

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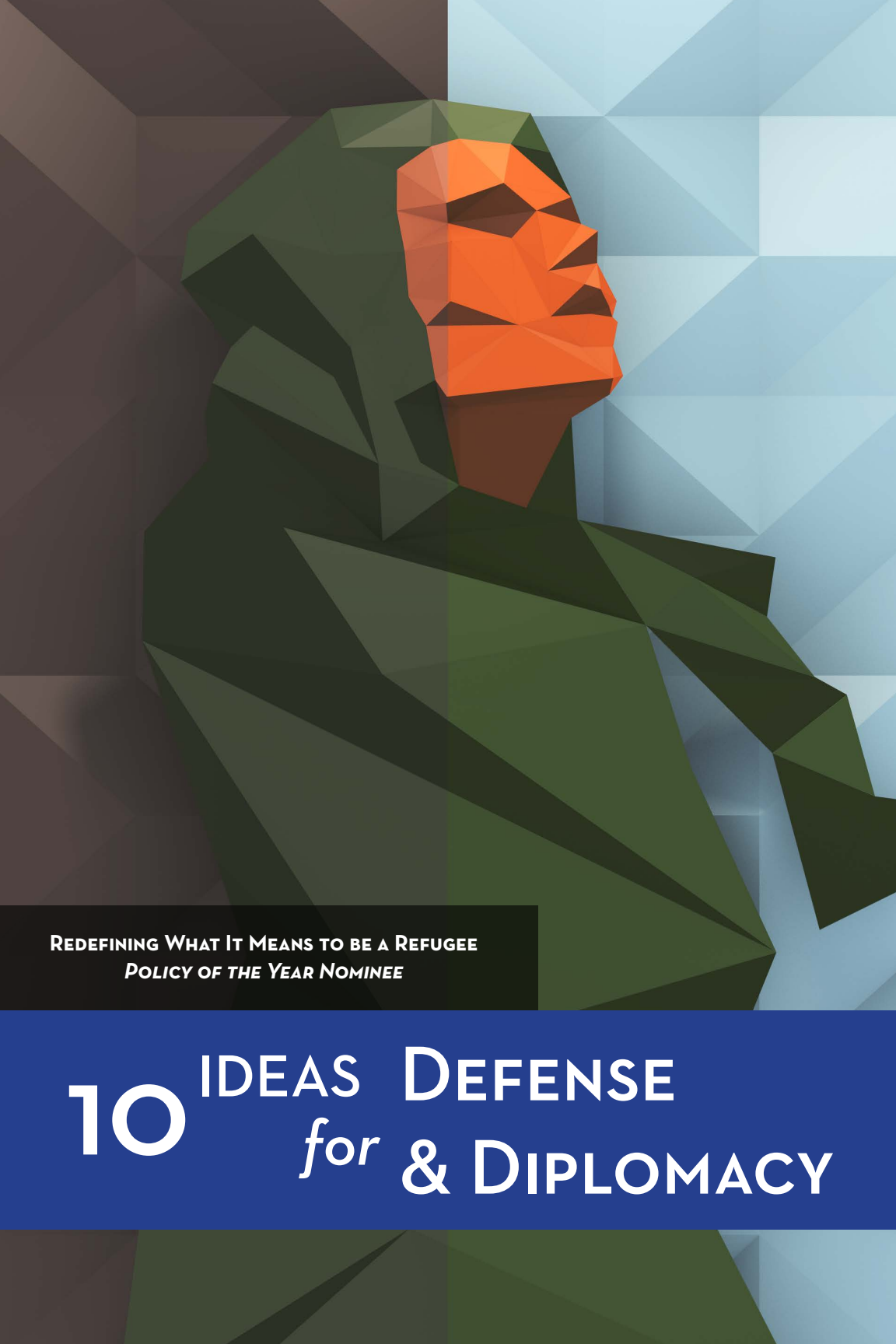
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# LETTER FROM NEW YORK CITY

**The Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network** was established in 2004 in response to the deep and pervasive sense that young people were overlooked in the policymaking process – that we could put boots on the ground and donate what little money we had to support leaders that promoted our progressive values, but our ideas, opinions, and priorities were not represented in our public discourse or electoral system. It was this realization and subsequent rejection of the status quo that led to the founding of what is now the nation's largest student policy organization.

That original purpose has endured as the Campus Network has grown to over 100 chapters. Yet at a recent gathering, one of our top leaders noted that the challenges we face in the wake of the 2012 election are similar to the ones that first brought us together. We are increasingly powerful actors in our public debates, but despite the bold ideas and ambitious agendas we've envisioned, designed, supported, and fought for, we are still beholden to a political process more focused on scoring partisan points than moving our country forward.

What emerged from that moment of collective reflection was the recognition of our unrealized potential as a movement. While our members' student-generated ideas and solutions-oriented action have redefined youth participation in the political process, it will take constant renewal and commitment to fresh ideas, rigorous engagement, and long-term action to achieve what we know is possible.

The 2013 10 Ideas series represents that ongoing effort to build the infrastructure, communities, and platforms that will allow us to realize the vision that was first laid out in dorm rooms across the country eight years ago. This year, our premier journals represent unique ideas from 83 authors at 30 different schools. As they go to press, our members are already translating those ideas into action by initiating petitions, collaborating with local partners and stakeholders, and lobbying on Capitol Hill.

Last year, we proudly presented the 10 Ideas series as a powerful reminder that this generation is not only willing to build a better future, but has already begun. This year, we put these solutions forward to demonstrate that members of this generation are in it for the long haul as part of an initiative that is always growing, always evolving, and always looking toward the future in the pursuit of progress.

Taylor Jo Isenberg  
National Director  
Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network



# WELCOME

**We are pleased to share** the fifth edition of the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network's flagship 10 Ideas series. These journals, encompassing the best student ideas from our six policy centers, are filled with game-changing public policy suggestions that we can and must implement now.

We are in desperate need of these ideas. Rising healthcare costs, increasing inequality, global climate change, and a government that often seems unable or unwilling to address the things that matter most are challenges that require the very best and the very brightest.

At the same time, we are told that Millennials are checked out, have lost interest, and are waiting for someone else to solve our problems. These journals are an answer to that narrative, making the clear case that we are engaged and active citizens, putting forward ideas to change the problems we see in the world around us. We believe in the power of people working together to solve problems.

Each year, the 10 Ideas journals provide a vision for change that addresses the needs of our neighborhoods, our cities, and our country. Working with community members, local nonprofits, professors, and lawmakers, these student authors have identified the policies that can make the most difference. Yet this journal represents just the tip of the iceberg, with many hours of organizing, researching, fundraising, and developing public campaigns hidden below the surface.

This year's Defense & Diplomacy journal reveals a real concern over our military tensions with China, and our students suggest several innovative ways to approach this potential hotbed. There is also a common theme of efficiency and improving the mechanisms through which defense and diplomacy function by tackling the ways we pay for and reward success within our systems. Finally, Millennials believe in the power of diplomacy and mediation in foreign conflict zones and are actively pursuing new pathways to peace.

Taken on its own, each idea is a simple solution. These journals and the 10 Ideas series taken together are a library of ideas that can help us build toward a more equal, accessible, and community-minded world.

Join us in seeing these ideas realized.

Alan Smith  
Program and Policy Director  
Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network

Lydia Bowers  
Deputy Program and Policy Director  
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# REDUCING VETERAN UNEMPLOYMENT: AMERICAN HEROES EDUCATION INSTITUTE

MOHAMMED A. ALAM, THE CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK

*The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs should engage in comprehensive career support for veterans by working with non-profit organizations and sponsoring an interactive 15-week educational training program.*

Over 2.4 million veterans have returned to civilian life since 9/11.<sup>1</sup> The national unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans was 10 percent as of November 2012.<sup>2</sup> While Veterans Affairs offers a program known as the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), roughly two-thirds of veterans receive this assistance and less than half find it useful.<sup>3</sup> TAP does not keep records of progress, and it provides general non-specific services, making it difficult for veterans to identify their individual skills. The roots of the problem lie in ineffective programs and poor use of resources. Veterans Affairs had a budget of \$968 million in 2012 for employment and rehabilitation services. Yet a large number of veterans are unable to translate their military skills into civilian jobs.<sup>4</sup> This proposal would create a more structured and results-oriented program.

## ANALYSIS

A 15-week program – undertaken upon completion of active duty – can reduce veteran unemployment. Veterans Affairs indicates that the G.I. Bill allocates approximately \$18,000 per veteran.<sup>5</sup> However, many do not claim these benefits.<sup>6</sup> The 15-week “institute” could use a portion of the funding from veterans entered into the program as educational expenses and would be able to track the progress of the assistance.<sup>7</sup> Nearly 1.6 million veterans receive TAP benefits, which costs an annual \$9 million. In addition to costing less, the institute will also provide a more effective and personalized program. It can deliver assistance to the nearly 900,000 veterans that are still unemployed.<sup>8</sup>

### KEY FACTS

- Among veterans ages 18 to 24, there is an unemployment rate of 30.2 percent.
- Veterans are accustomed to the organization and structure of the military. However, no similar structures exist for veterans entering the workforce. This results in a lack of available support and creates serious obstacles when entering the job market.<sup>12</sup>

The institute can be broken down into four parts. First, veterans will be assisted with a rehabilitation counselor to work one-on-one in transitioning back into civilian life. Second, veterans will receive educational seminars, which will highlight different career choices and how to pursue a college degree. Third, veterans will receive training in professional skills such as networking and writing a job application, resumes, and cover letters. Fourth, veterans will learn how to take the skills and knowledge they gained through military service, determine their transferability, and match them to civilian jobs. Those with concentrated skills, for example a medic, will receive specialized career and educational assistance to convert them into civilian services.<sup>9</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

The institute would be implemented by a partnership of government agencies, veteran agencies, and non-profit organizations. In addition to federal and non-profit resources, the Department of Labor issues grants for up to \$1,250,000.<sup>10</sup> It can then be housed in community centers, federal offices, and public universities across the country. A program structure can be provided on the national

level and administered by local efforts to address problems that are specific to each community. Toward the end of the institute, partner organizations can work together to set up and host career fairs across the country. Veterans can then use the skills and tools they have recently gained to find suitable employment.

### TALKING POINTS

- The American Heroes Education Institute can begin the process of improving these problems with rehabilitation, transferability of skills, and employment.

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# COMBINED TASK FORCE AS A CATALYST FOR US-CHINESE COOPERATION

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*Tensions are rising between the United States and China in the South China Sea. Creating a joint anti-piracy task force comprised of the U.S. Navy and the People's Liberation Army Navy vessels would alleviate tensions, strengthen ties, and help avoid strategic miscalculation.*

Escalating tension between the U.S. and China compels a careful reexamination of U.S. policy in East Asia. Recent territorial disputes and rising piracy rates in the South China Sea demonstrate the need for more effective Chinese and U.S. maritime policy.<sup>1</sup> This coming year offers a tremendous opportunity to negotiate with China under newly elected Xi Jinping, and maritime alliances should be one topic broached during these discussions. An anti-piracy taskforce would serve as a catalyst to further strengthen Sino-American relations and would be more politically feasible than traditional alliances, as it is less formal and comprehensive.<sup>2</sup>

## ANALYSIS

President Obama's strategic "pivot" has enhanced relations with East Asian partners, but it comes at a cost.<sup>3</sup> Many Chinese defense analysts perceive it as an effort to contain China's rise and U.S. statements to the contrary have not allayed Beijing's fears.<sup>4</sup> Meaningful steps should be taken to improve relations, including an express willingness to cooperate on naval matters. In 2008, China joined international anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden.<sup>5</sup> This represents a break from its previous reluctance to become involved and provides an opportunity to expand naval cooperation.

The need for improved relations is clear: over one-third of international trade passes through here and "to the extent the world economy has a geographical center, it the South China Sea."<sup>6</sup> Unilateral anti-piracy operations are underway, yet sea lanes in the South China Sea remain among the world's most dangerous.<sup>7</sup>

Maritime incidents, such as the collision between Soviet warships and the U.S.S. Walker, demonstrate how collisions may potentially spiral out of control.<sup>8</sup> Naval communication can be challenging and high risks for miscommunication exist in areas of high maritime traffic such as the South China Sea. A combined taskforce would help prevent miscalculations.

## KEY FACTS

- In monetary value, over one-third of world trade travels through the South China Sea and the Malacca Straits.<sup>12</sup>
- The South China Sea has the second highest rate of piracy in the world, with an average of over 70 pirate attacks per year.<sup>13</sup>

The U.S. Navy already conducts patrols in the area, and this coalition would not increase costs. Because both navies would contribute vessels, the number of ships from the U.S. may actually shrink, thus reducing costs.

The force should have a parallel command structure to facilitate military-to-military communication and simplify logistical integration between ships from different navies.<sup>9</sup> Parallel command is easier to accept politically and allows nations to opt out if goals diverge from their own.<sup>10</sup> Many Chinese policymakers are wary of binding commitments because of other longstanding disagreements, so this force should remain rooted in responding to security threats affecting both states.<sup>11</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

Mobilizing support within different parts of the U.S. and Chinese governments is key. Discussing this task force in a summit between Mr. Jinping and President Obama would give it legitimacy and could exemplify efforts to improve military-to-military communication. The Obama administration should publicly present the idea to gauge popular support in both China and the U.S.

Securing military support should emphasize mutual benefits, which include increased safety for trade goods and reduced operational costs for both navies. Ultimately, this joint task force can serve as a model to foster increased cooperation and reduce tensions between China, the U.S., and other Southeast Asian states.

### TALKING POINTS

- Piracy in the South China Sea remains a significant threat to maritime security.<sup>14</sup>
- China has recently demonstrated a willingness to cooperate in anti-piracy operations.<sup>15</sup> This policy would offer an opportunity to cooperate and reduce costs without compromising on security.
- A joint task force is a first step to integrate China into security alliances to help improve global stability.

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# ELIMINATING SEXUAL ASSAULT IN THE UNITED STATES

## MILITARY USING INDIVIDUALIZED ATTENTION ON BASES

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*In the upcoming efforts to combat rape and sexual assault in the United States military, a more personal and individualized connection between the Department of Defense and soldiers should be implemented to prevent future assaults.*

Since 2006, more than 95,000 service members have been sexually assaulted,<sup>1</sup> though the Pentagon estimates that reported cases make up only 15 percent of sexual assault incidents.<sup>2</sup> Although the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO) has responded to cases of sexual assault with awareness videos, leaflets, briefings, and posters, these efforts have made no significant progress. Congress developed the Sexual Assault Training Oversight and Prevention (STOP) Act (H.R. 3435) that creates a new office within the Department of Defense composed of a majority of civilians who would deal directly with cases of sexual assault, as opposed to the previous method of remanding cases to a soldier's chain of command.<sup>3</sup> This department is charged with developing programs to educate soldiers about sexual assault and rape, as well as realistic preventative techniques.<sup>4</sup> While this is an excellent first step, this program is so far removed from the soldiers it affects that it may not be effective enough to truly mobilize change. There should be a special point person (or a group of point persons) from this department that deals with specific problems unique to each military base or service academy. Dissolving SAPRO's ineffective efforts, as well as the forthcoming drawback of troops in Afghanistan, will leave room in the defense budget to make this necessary change possible. Through detailed research, targeted programs and training, and the ability to respond rapidly in cases of sexual assault, positive changes can be made and sexual assault can be prevented and dealt with appropriately. These steps will lead to a culture of respect and will ultimately result in greater unit cohesion, trust, and safety.

### KEY FACTS

- A woman serving in Iraq or Afghanistan is more likely to be raped by a fellow service member than to be killed in the line of fire.<sup>5</sup>
- More than 86 percent of service members do not report their assault, either out of fear of ruining their military careers or because the individual responsible for handling these cases is either the accused or a friend of the accused.<sup>6</sup>
- Men are also victims. In 2010, nearly 50,000 male veterans screened positive for "military sexual trauma" at the US Department of Veterans Affairs.<sup>7</sup>

### ANALYSIS

Designating a point person will give soldiers access to unbiased professionals trained in dealing with cases of sexual assault. Although the military has its own culture, subcultures of toleration exist within many bases. A specialized professional, as opposed to a far removed bureau, can respond effectively and develop programs that can dissolve the tolerance of sexual assault. Because these individuals will be civilians separate from the Chain of Command, conflicts of interest will be virtually nonexistent.

## NEXT STEPS

The SAPRO should designate a group of professionals to the bases or service academies that have prevalent and persistent problems with sexual assault to identify and solve problems. These bases should have more hands-on and intensive training for soldiers and cadets, rather than the usual briefing soldiers receive in Basic Training. While it cannot be said for sure whether or not this program will need to be a permanent fixture in the military, it will at least incorporate intolerance for sexual assault into the values system the military holds deeply.

In addition, to make this effort more unified across the armed forces, there should be an annual or bi-annual forum for victims and families, the professionals who work on these bases, and the Council and Office. Working with specific bases in this way and conducting an annual or bi-annual forum will hopefully eradicate the tolerance in military culture of sexual assault and rape and will make this issue one that can be spoken about openly and seriously.

### TALKING POINTS

- Recently, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta mandated that sexual assault cases be dealt with at the colonel level and above. While this helps ensure that reports of sexual assault are not dismissed by the Chain of Command, it does not solve the problem of sexual assault occurring in the first place or of eradicating its tolerance.<sup>8</sup>
- Most sexual assault victims would feel most comfortable having their investigations conducted by professionally trained civilians rather than by fellow service members.<sup>9</sup>

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# ADAPTING TO CHINA'S RISE AS A SIGNIFICANT NAVAL POWER

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*To recognize the claims of all parties to disputes in the South China Sea and prevent an outbreak of conflict in the disputed areas, the United States should establish a code of conduct with ASEAN.*

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China have long contested each other's territorial claims in the South China Sea. China claims to control a region of the sea far beyond the Exclusive Economic Zone it is entitled to under the U.N. Law of the Sea.<sup>1</sup> Recently, claims have come to a head as China has sabotaged efforts by the Philippines and Vietnam to search for oil and gas in these territories. Left unchecked, these disputes could potentially escalate into a broader regional conflict. It is in the U.S.'s best interest to take steps towards averting a potential crisis, as it could disrupt American trade, valued at \$1.2 trillion, currently passing through the South China Sea. Moreover, if the Philippines and China went to war over territorial conflicts, the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951 between the U.S. and the Philippines would force the U.S. to either enter a destructive war with China or nullify the treaty and jeopardize its relationships with other regional allies. Because of these economic and political incentives, the U.S. should use its clout as the world's preeminent naval power to negotiate a code of conduct that will govern interactions between the navies of the nations involved in the South China Sea dispute.

## KEY FACTS

- \$5.3 trillion worth of trade passes through the South China Sea annually.<sup>4</sup>
- The Philippines reported 11 incidents of harassment by China in 2011.<sup>5</sup>

## ANALYSIS

If the U.S. could broker a deal between ASEAN and China that encompasses exclusive economic zones, oil exploration rights, and other related issues, it could ensure a more peaceful and stable future for the South China Sea area. A binding code of conduct agreed to by all parties would provide certainty that no nation would attack another's assets, considerably reducing tensions between China and ASEAN. China has proven willing to engage in multilateral agreements in the past, so it could be expected to obey the rules of the code.<sup>2</sup> This is particularly true if the U.S. agrees to accommodate China's desire for influence in surrounding waters by conducting joint American-Chinese naval patrols. This would allow the Chinese to monitor their claimed waters, while the presence of American ships would assure U.S. allies like the Philippines that their own territorial rights are being protected. Sharing naval patrol costs with China should also be an attractive proposition for the cash-strapped U.S. government. Nobody involved in this conflict wants to disrupt the \$5.3 trillion worth of trade that flows annually through the South China Sea.<sup>3</sup> In the end, the transaction costs of establishing a code of conduct would be far less than the costs incurred by further increases in military tensions. Such tensions would jeopardize the integrity of international shipping lanes in the South China Sea, which are pivotal for the region's economic vitality.



## NEXT STEPS

The creation and implementation of a code of conduct for the South China Sea will be a slow and difficult process. Before anything else, the State Department should create a prototypical “ideal” treaty that would represent the best policies for containing conflict in the region and serve as the model for the U.S. bargaining position. Meanwhile, the U.S. Navy should plan a joint patrol of the South China Sea with the Chinese Navy. This would require an understanding of the logistics involved, the specifics of Chinese naval protocol, and training naval personnel to cooperate with Chinese sailors. The diplomatic community should privately relay these ideas to U.S. allies in the region to be sure that they would support the deal. Once diplomats are sure that a code of conduct would be viable, they should announce a summit in which China, ASEAN, and the U.S. would draw it up. The American diplomats at the conference should have clear priorities beforehand, including a list of policies that they would be willing to compromise on and policies that are nonnegotiable. If the conference succeeds, the next step would be ratification by the involved parties and implementation. The U.S. diplomatic community and the Obama administration should go to the media to publicize the benefits of the code and use this as leverage with the involved parties to make sure they sign and obey the code of conduct.

### TALKING POINTS

- Disputes between China and ASEAN in the South China Sea could lead to war.
- War would jeopardize the economies of the South China Sea region and the U.S.
- A code of conduct would prohibit disputants from antagonizing each other.

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# EMPOWERING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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*A policy providing incentives for investing in companies run by Arab women in the Middle East would result in a more pluralistic Middle East and encourage new post-Arab Spring democracies to develop. Aiding the economic growth of countries in the region would also improve U.S. foreign relations with Arab countries, and both sides would reap the benefits of an improved business relationship.*

As a result of the Arab Spring, the people of Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya democratically elected their leadership for the first time in recent history. As these newly elected regimes contemplate different means of reform, we must encourage them to develop their democracies, and thus the degree of political rights and civil liberties in the region. “International support is critical,” Secretary of State Hillary Clinton remarked at the UN in September. It is in the U.S.’s interest to “help countries in transition find the right path forward.”<sup>1</sup>

## KEY FACTS

- Research has shown that economic empowerment is one of the most important interventions to improve women’s rights.<sup>3</sup> This is exemplified in Saudi Arabia, where women’s economic advancement has led to a moderate winding back of restrictions on women.<sup>4</sup>

A large discrepancy between the number of educated Arab women and the number Arab women in the workforce currently hampers the economy and political plurality of the countries in the region. In Qatar, for example, where women constitute 63% of the university population, they make up only 12% of the workforce and 7% of legislators, senior officials, and managers, according to CNN citing the UN Statistics Division.<sup>2</sup> Women participate in the economy informally through handicraft production, bread baking, “petty commodity trading, selling articles at weekly markets and acting as the middle-woman in transporting goods between rural and urban areas.”<sup>5</sup> An increase in female labor participation rates in accordance with education levels in the Middle East could raise household earnings by 25% and allow per capita GDP rates to reach their full potential.<sup>12</sup>

Most of the U.S. government funding from the Overseas Private Investment Corporation is not located in Arab countries experiencing a post-revolution transition. The National Endowment for Democracy, however, has given grants to organizations in Arab transitional democracies, and several have been beneficial to women. They include an association for women’s political participation in Tunisia, a feminist studies center in Egypt, and a women’s rights advocacy campaign in Iraq.<sup>7</sup> Women, according to The Economist, are the world’s most under-utilized resource,<sup>14</sup> and an increase in women’s participation in the workforce would simultaneously further advance equal gender rights and support economic development.

## ANALYSIS

President Obama’s FY 2013 budget includes funding that “responds to the Arab Spring by supporting the aspirations of people in the Middle East and North Africa, with more than \$800 million to assist countries in transition and create incentives for long-term economic, political, and trade reforms.”<sup>8</sup> This spending, the OMB report states, fosters “stability around the world to protect our national security,” and supports economic growth both abroad and domestically, opening new markets for U.S. businesses and increasing trade.<sup>8</sup> If the U.S. were

to allocate some of this funding to encourage investment in businesses run by Arab women, it would help offset the damage inflicted by oil booms on women's advancement in the region. Indeed, studies have shown that "when a nation's oil profits soar, the number of women in the workforce invariably declines the next year."<sup>9</sup> This has profound consequences on women's political engagement, as "leaving home and entering the workplace produces greater political awareness and participation among women" as well as a force to fight patriarchal norms and restrictions on women's rights that limit developing democracies.<sup>9</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

A policy incentivizing investment in companies run by Arab women - supplemented by increased funding from the National Endowment for Democracy and expanded OPIC projects in post-Arab Spring countries - would encourage democracy development and "help solve critical world challenges and in doing so, advance U.S. foreign policy."<sup>6</sup> OPIC should expand its projects to include nations with new democracies - and perhaps refer to the US government's Millennium Challenge Corporation's indicators tracking countries' social and economic progress.<sup>13</sup> These women-run, eligible businesses would be obligated to employ a high percentage of other Arab women and, in doing so, be dedicated to furthering women's political rights and civil liberties.

### TALKING POINTS

- The free trade agreement with Morocco is expected to "increase US economic activity by \$178 million annually".<sup>10</sup>
- Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for their work in micro-credit, giving loans to poor people in Bangladesh that allowed them to work to bring about their own development. "Micro-credit has proven to be an important liberating force in societies where women in particular have to struggle against repressive social and economic conditions," according to the Nobel Peace Prize press release.<sup>11</sup>

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# THE UNITED STATES: THE ARSENAL OF PEACEKEEPING

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*To make peacekeeping more effective, the United Nations, with funding from the U.S., should increase reimbursement payments. This would encourage peacekeeping and improve the quality of peacekeepers.*

U.N. peacekeepers have a long and controversial history, with successes as well as failures. In Professor Virginia Page Fortna's study, "Does Peacekeeping Work?," she concludes that peacekeeping has been mostly successful.<sup>1</sup> Currently, the \$7.23 billion<sup>2</sup> U.N. peacekeeping budget is not enough to effectively cover all of its obligations. One aspect of the budget in need of more funding is the compensation to countries that volunteer soldiers. Nations that volunteer soldiers receive \$1,028 per soldier.<sup>3</sup> As many of the nations that provide peacekeeping (India, Bangladesh, Nigeria etc.<sup>4</sup>) become wealthier—and their militaries become more expensive and sophisticated—the \$1,028 reimbursement will become less attractive. This means that the burden of peacekeeping will fall upon even poorer states. These states' militaries are less well equipped and trained, and the performance of peacekeeping missions will reflect that. Increasing the reimbursements would encourage middle-income nations to contribute their soldiers. With higher quality soldiers, U.N. peacekeeping missions would be much more effective.

## ANALYSIS

Increasing the reimbursement by 20 percent, to \$1,233, would cost \$205 per soldier. With 97,199 soldiers and policemen currently in the field,<sup>5</sup> this would cause reimbursement costs to go from \$100 million to \$120 million. In the current climate of international concern about deficits, it may seem wasteful to increase funding to the U.N. However, compared to the \$3.7 trillion<sup>6</sup> cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, peacekeeping operations are cheap. Aside from humanitarian benefits, like preventing the deaths of civilians and avoiding the lawlessness that arises in war-torn areas, investing in peacekeeping will yield returns in the long run. One study found that spending \$100 million on a peacekeeping initiative reduces the risk of conflict from 38 percent to 16.5 percent.<sup>7</sup> Given that each percentage point of risk is worth about \$2.5 billion to the world,<sup>8</sup> a \$100 million peacekeeping operation would have a payoff of \$53.75 billion. If this \$20 million investment leads to just a few more peaceful nations, future trade relationships alone would pay back that investment. For example, in 2001, the final year of the Sierra Leone Civil War, American exports to Sierra Leone totaled \$27.8 million. Eleven years of peace later, American exports were worth \$96 million.<sup>9</sup> A more successful peacekeeping regime would aid in the transition from a unilateral strategy in international affairs to a more multilateral one, in which international conflicts would be solved through multilateral institutions.

### KEY FACTS

- Third-party peacekeeping has proven to be a cost-effective way to bring peace to states around the world.
- If the reimbursement rate for states that provide U.N. peacekeepers does not increase, there is a danger that they will stop providing troops.
- A \$100 million investment in peacekeeping can save the world \$53.75 billion.

## NEXT STEPS

The U.S. should increase its funding allotment to U.N. peacekeeping at the next opportunity. It should ensure that these new funds go to the reimbursement of nations providing peacekeepers. One impediment to implementing this policy is the perceived reluctance to act through and fund the United Nations. In the U.S., traditionally seen as the most unilateral Western nation, one poll found that 86 percent of the population support the U.S. having an active role in the organization, with 64 percent saying the U.S. should pay its dues fully and on time.<sup>10</sup> Currently, the United States provides 27 percent of the U.N. peacekeeping budget.<sup>11</sup> This may seem costly, but this \$1.95 billion investment is approximately 474 times smaller than the U.S. defense budget.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, from a fiscal perspective, investing in peacekeeping is a short-term cost that will pay off in the long run. Every \$1 million invested pays back \$538 million. Citizens may at first be suspicious of spending more money on other countries, but this policy can be framed as a short-term cost that will have long-term societal and economic benefits.

### TALKING POINTS

- Peacekeeping has been successful at bringing peace, which brings economic development. The U.S. gains from economic development in all parts of the world, as every nation is a potential trade partner.
- Peacekeeping is more successful when there are better trained troops serving. To raise the incentives for wealthier nations to contribute troops, the reimbursement rate should be raised.
- The cost of this raise is far outweighed by the economic benefits from trade and stability.

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# A CHILD'S WAR: SETTLER VIOLENCE IN THE WEST BANK

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*Community Dispute Resolution Centers created by community leaders in the West Bank will not only create a culture of collaboration, but will ultimately decrease settler violence.*

Contemporary settler violence is a deliberate campaign by a committed core of young settlers targeting communities where Palestinian youth are the majority. It is, indeed, a child's war. Hilltop Youth use a strategy called "price tag" that involves grass roots retaliation against efforts challenging the settlement enterprise. A loosely organized group of young settlers, their efforts include blocking traffic, setting fields on fire, throwing rocks, and other acts of small-scale violence against local Palestinians and members of the Israeli security forces. In February 2012, a mosque was attacked, prayer mats were burnt, insults sprayed and war declared on the walls of a Palestinian village called Burka in what is considered one of the most 'provocative' acts of violence in Israel this year. The youth are often noted for establishing illegal outposts outside existing settlements and are protected by the Israeli military due to their Israeli citizenship.

## KEY FACTS

- Extremist settlers launched almost 300 attacks on Palestinian property in 2011 alone, which resulted in over 100 Palestinian casualties and caused extensive property damage for Palestinian farmers, who lost approximately 10,000 trees.
- Settler attacks on Palestinian residents tripled between 2009 and 2011.
- Rule of law has proven to be ineffective in resolving the ongoing violence in the West Bank. Of the documented investigations concerning crimes against Palestinians, 87% of assault offenses and 92% of the criminal trespass cases were closed without indictments being filed against suspects.

Political and security officials pledged to implement several measures to curb and punish these violent attacks. However, Israeli security services have generally maintained their lax movement and access policies in the West Bank despite this "homegrown terror".

As the occupying power, the Israeli military maintains public order and protects the safety of Palestinian residents in sectors B and C. In a ruling regarding the security forces' duty to enable the olive harvest to be carried out undisturbed, B'Tselem (2012) quotes the Supreme Court ruling which maintains that the military must "allocate forces to protect the property of the Palestinian residents." Yet while Israeli military forces are required by law to protect both Palestinian and Israeli residents of the West Bank in sectors B and C, the current system of jurisprudence fails to create a mutual sense of security and cooperation.

## ANALYSIS

Research from UNDP Ghana, UNDP Nepal, and USAID indicates that local mediation effectively cultivates peace in post-conflict regions. There have been numerous mediation initiatives in post-conflict countries including Guyana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Timor Leste.

There are many advantages to using mediation as it is a non-adversarial process with low bureaucratic costs and an assurance of neutrality. But more importantly, mediation provides disputants an opportunity to find solutions to their own conflicts. The process therefore ensures acceptance of the outcome by both parties and subsequently a framework for sustainable peace.

In lieu of hybrid jurisprudence, the Central Command should establish local Community Dispute Resolution Centers to mediate disputes between settlers and Palestinians. By acting in partnership with the Hilltop Youth, YESHA Council, the Palestinian Authority, Palestinian community leaders, and the UN, mutual investment will be ensured.

The initiation and maintenance of any project between these historically contentious interest groups is not an easy task. Equitable terms concerning municipal level issues create a localized perspective that breaks down the larger conflict into smaller aggressions affecting everyday life. Opposition to dialogue is inevitable yet manageable if mutual respect and investment are achieved.

CDRC's will not address the macro conflict but rather the micro cases of aggression on both sides through neutral mediation. The UN will temporarily hire, train, and evaluate mediators from both Israeli settler and Palestinian communities in accordance with international standards and strategies to ensure this neutrality.

## TALKING POINTS

- Both B'Tselem and Shin Bet warn that contemporary settler violence is a deliberate campaign by a committed core of youth settlers targeting communities where Palestinian youth are the majority.
- The current policy of non-action will foster a radicalized generation that could undermine West Bank peace and create a secondary front of resistance, further threatening Israeli security.
- While CDRCs will not address the macro conflict, responding to cases of micro aggression de-escalate contemporary tensions and re-define "the other" as human.
- The careful integration of key community leaders from all sides in the construction of CDRCs creates a sense mutual investment and legitimacy for future CDRC efforts but creates a counter history of cooperation.

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# MORE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT OFFICERS

GRAHAM PALMER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA - CHAPEL HILL

*The U.S. Military should modify its “up or out” promotion system in order to encourage officers to either leave the service early or stay for their entire careers.*

The current promotion system in the military, codified in the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) of 1980, is organized around the principle of “up or out.” After a certain number of years, officers are eligible for promotion to the next grade level of ranks.<sup>1</sup> After the military passes them over for selection twice (once at higher levels), officers are required to leave the service.<sup>2</sup> This system has become outdated and costly. Most officers who are forced out by this system still receive generous pension benefits, and with pension costs currently consuming 20 percent of the defense budget, reducing them would allow for reductions in defense spending without any damage to America’s military capability.<sup>3</sup> By changing the promotion system for the armed services, savings can be realized while simultaneously improving the quality of American military officers.

## ANALYSIS

Promotion currently becomes less likely at higher ranks, just as officers reach middle age and are most financially vulnerable.<sup>4</sup> This has led many officers to leave for more secure jobs in the private sector.<sup>5</sup> Many of these officers leave after 20 years of service or more, meaning they receive benefits under the military’s pension plans. As a result, the military spends over \$100 billion a year on retirement pay, and spending is projected to double by 2034.<sup>6</sup> Much of this money is paid to officers who retire in middle age when they could still serve for up to 20 more years.<sup>7</sup> Many military thinkers have also come to believe that the current promotion structure contributes to what Thomas Ricks has called a “culture of mediocrity” within America’s officer corps.<sup>8</sup> Officers are encouraged to strive for a “risk-averse middle” instead of showing initiative so that they are not forced out.<sup>9</sup>

### KEY FACTS

- The U.S. military spends over \$100 billion a year in retirement pay.<sup>12</sup>
- Military spending represents 58 percent of federal discretionary spending.<sup>13</sup>
- Changing the military promotion system could save \$100 billion over the next 10 years.<sup>14</sup>

The “up or out” system should be adjusted so that fewer officers stay through their first few years of service. Higher ranking officers should have higher promotion rates and longer promotion periods. Under this system, the military can both save money and increase the quality of its officer corps. The savings from implementing this system have been estimated at \$100 billion over the next decade.<sup>10</sup> Although private sector jobs offer better pay on average, job security is a major factor that drives successful officers to leave the military.<sup>11</sup> This system would increase job security, making the military a better long-term option and causing fewer officers to leave in the prime of their careers. Additionally, longer promotion periods would make senior officers more experienced and thus more effective.



## NEXT STEPS

Military leaders may claim that this policy would be unfair to soldiers who have made sacrifices for their country. It should be emphasized, then, that this policy would only change the promotion system and those who choose to leave after 20 years would still receive pensions. This policy would benefit the military by freeing up money for other uses and making the officer corps more effective. Given that this policy would strengthen our military while saving money, both parties should support this policy.

### TALKING POINTS

- The current military promotion system provides incentives for officers to stay until middle age and then leave to collect a pension and work in the private sector.
- There is a glut of middle-ranking officers and a promotion system that encourages early retirement.
- Changing the system would create a more effective officer corps and save taxpayers money.

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# TRAINING 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY LEADERS TO HANDLE 21ST CENTURY GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

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*We should hold an annual summit for college students from pivotal states to foster focused student engagement and improve bilateral relations in the changing 21st century global landscape.*

From the unprecedented youth uprisings that characterized the Arab Spring to the assertive political pronouncements of a Russian rock band, youth political engagement is proliferating around the world. Nearly half of the world's population is under 25,<sup>1</sup> but the potential of this immense demographic is not fully utilized in current global policy discussions. The world's leading economies, the G8 and G20, created a conference to foster these kinds of discussions among the youth of participating countries. While participating in the Youth G8 and G20 summits could increase the power of their voices, these forums are ill equipped to deal with the specific challenges of 21st century global governance, such as the role of social media in diplomacy and changing global power centers.

## KEY FACTS

- Currently, 3 billion people (nearly half of the world's population) are under 25, yet policy discussions to address global issues often exclude their voices.
- The composition of the Youth G8 and G20 does not include pivotal, emerging actors or other significant members of the global community. This reflects its focus on building entrepreneurial relations rather than versatile diplomatic channels.

## ANALYSIS

A summit could be hosted by the U.S. State Department's American Council on Young Political Leaders (ACYPL) in tandem with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to bring a wider array of actors than the traditional hierarchy into the process. Using the 10 Ideas framework to shape this constructive dialogue, the summit would result in effective policy solutions that could increase the voices of a marginalized global youth population without resorting to extreme measures. In addition, the relationships made during this summit could lay the groundwork for improving or establishing relations with pivotal actors by focusing on common problems rather than national interests.

The exclusivity of the Youth G8 and G20 summits has led other influential actors to feel marginalized. The proposed summit avoids this problem by including Egypt, Iran, Turkey, Russia, and Brazil in its first round of attendees. Inclusion is not based solely on economic prosperity, but rather on other influential features, such as Brazil's strength in the energy sector<sup>2</sup> and Turkey's increasing geopolitical importance.<sup>3</sup> Egypt and Iran are not members of the Youth G8 and G20 conferences, yet their influence is evident. If this first summit is successful, it could include other actors in the future, such as Sweden and Finland in particular. Both countries are leaders in a region that consistently receives

high ratings in education, healthcare, and environmental consciousness on The Better Life Index published by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.<sup>4</sup>

The partnership between AYCPL and UNESCO is beneficial for both parties, improving relations between the U.S. and UNESCO, which declined in 2011 over disagreement on Palestinian statehood<sup>5</sup>. Since then, UNESCO's budget has suffered, causing the organization to reduce personnel and restrict its operations. Working on this joint project could pave the way for provisional funding. Improving relations with UNESCO would improve the international community's perception of the U.S.

### NEXT STEPS

Support from the AYCPL and UNESCO alleviates much of the financial burden from attendees. If the summit is effective, donors (such as influential think tanks and media groups) could provide additional funding. The delegates for this summit would be chosen with help from the International Institute for Higher Education. The host, who would provide housing, would rotate in to dispel fears of one voice dominating the conference. This rotation also ensures that one country does not have to continuously provide housing. Featuring a live Twitter feed, the program would culminate in a multimedia presentation via live stream, increasing the summit's audience, scope, and efficacy.

### TALKING POINTS

- Youth participation could reduce the likelihood that young people will resort to violent forms of political participation such as terrorist activity.
- Connections made could lay groundwork for increased multilateralism in American foreign policy without being interventionist or overtly reactive.
- As students learn more about issues of governance, their knowledge of their government will increase, mitigating the decline of civic education in the American K-12 educational system.

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# REDEFINING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A “REFUGEE”

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*In order to better alleviate refugee crises around the world, the UNHCR Statute and 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees should redefine the term “refugee” to include contemporary trends of forced displacement.*

In 1950, following World War II, the U.N. General Assembly created the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in order to protect refugees and alleviate their plight.<sup>1</sup> The creation of the UNCHR coincided with the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, as well as a Statute that defines a “refugee” as someone who, due to their fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, or political opinion, is unable or unwilling to return to his country of residence. In addition, the statute specifies a refugee as a victim of the events that occurred before January 1, 1951.<sup>2</sup>

As the decades have progressed since the UNCHR and Statute were created, states around the world have come to see refugees and their prolonged presence as a security concern and a threat to social cohesion and national identity, as well as a burden on local and national economies.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the purpose of the UNHCR and Statute is to work with states to ensure that these people receive protection from persecution, reintegration within their original country or integration within a new country, or humanitarian aid so that global refugee crises are effectively mitigated.

Over the years, the UNHCR has had to work around its limited mandate in order to navigate the changing political environment. For the past 60 years, the global refugee regime has revolved around agreements and definitions that are obsolete, especially after the end of the Cold War. As a result the UNHCR is in a constant state of adaptation and expansion of both its core mandate and the scope of its work in order to achieve its goals within the context of a changing political landscape and changing dynamics of forced displacement.<sup>4</sup>

## ANALYSIS

Since the end of the Cold War, the nature of forced displacement has changed, intertwining with wider trends in world politics that include climate change, international migration, urbanization, food insecurity, state fragility, and terrorism.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, only about 10 million of the 47 million people who have been forcibly displaced worldwide receive aid from the UNCHR.<sup>6</sup> Thus, rather than force the UNHCR to work within an archaic framework, the UNHCR Statute and 1951 Convention should be updated to redefine what it means to be a “refugee” in the post-Cold War and post-9/11 world, so that the

### KEY FACTS

- The UNHCR was established following the events of WWII and its statute reflects the political environment of the time period.
- Along with the 1951 convention, a specific definition for the term “refugee” was laid out, including people who are persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality or political opinion.
- In the post-Cold War and post-9/11 periods, new trends of forced displacement have gradually emerged.

UNCHR and states around the world can legitimately provide protection, aid, integration, reintegration, and other durable solutions to several million of the world's forcibly displaced population.

### NEXT STEPS

The UNHCR should update its Statute and 1951 Convention and in its new definition of the term “refugee” include people who not only have a fear of persecution due to race, religion, nationality or political opinion but also people who have been displaced due to trends like climate change, international migration, urbanization, food insecurity, state fragility, and terrorism. With this change, the current global refugee regime will reshape itself within a contemporary context of political and international affairs and will ultimately maximize the alleviation of contemporary refugee crises around the world.

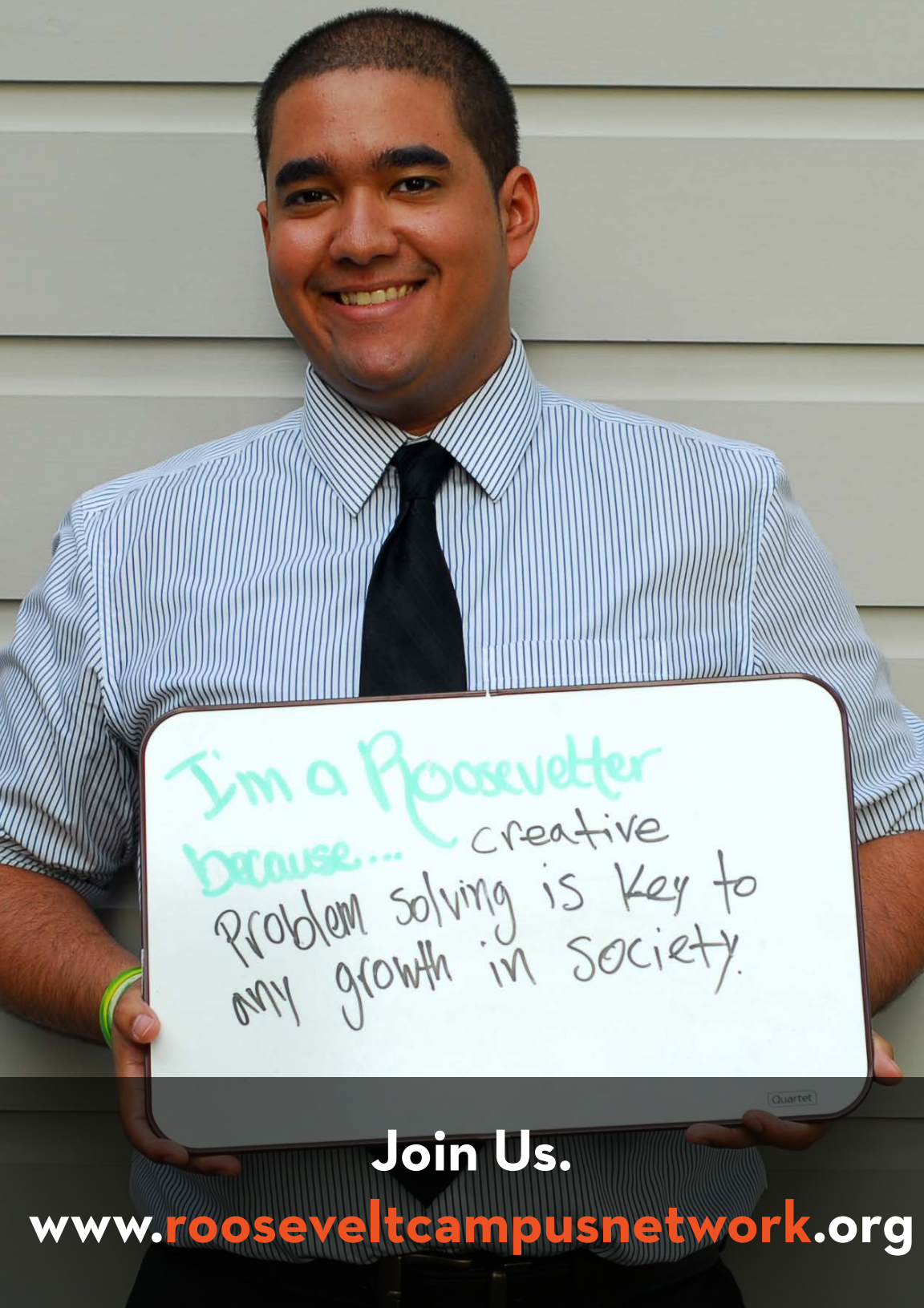
#### TALKING POINTS

- The UNHCR continually has to work within the limited scope of its 60-year-old statute in order to effectively alleviate contemporary refugee crises.
- At the beginning of 2011, the UNHCR estimated that there were 43.7 million forcibly displaced people worldwide and among this number only 10.55 million refugees were under the office's care.

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You will see pieces scattered throughout this document that connect directly to the Government By and For Millennial America project, the recent initiative from the Campus Network that projects the values of this generation onto the systems of American government, and seeks to imagine and then build an ideal version of what our government can - and must - be. Marked by this logo,



these pieces represent the sort of ideas that fit within the structure our Millennial vision for government. They are focused and specific plans for change that can make government more innovative, more engaging, and more democratic.

To learn more about the Government By and For project, please visit our website [www.rooseveltcampusnetwork.org](http://www.rooseveltcampusnetwork.org).

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# LETTER FROM NEW YORK CITY

**The Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network** was established in 2004 in response to the deep and pervasive sense that young people were overlooked in the policymaking process – that we could put boots on the ground and donate what little money we had to support leaders that promoted our progressive values, but our ideas, opinions, and priorities were not represented in our public discourse or electoral system. It was this realization and subsequent rejection of the status quo that led to the founding of what is now the nation's largest student policy organization.

That original purpose has endured as the Campus Network has grown to over 100 chapters. Yet at a recent gathering, one of our top leaders noted that the challenges we face in the wake of the 2012 election are similar to the ones that first brought us together. We are increasingly powerful actors in our public debates, but despite the bold ideas and ambitious agendas we've envisioned, designed, supported, and fought for, we are still beholden to a political process more focused on scoring partisan points than moving our country forward.

What emerged from that moment of collective reflection was the recognition of our unrealized potential as a movement. While our members' student-generated ideas and solutions-oriented action have redefined youth participation in the political process, it will take constant renewal and commitment to fresh ideas, rigorous engagement, and long-term action to achieve what we know is possible.

The 2013 10 Ideas series represents that ongoing effort to build the infrastructure, communities, and platforms that will allow us to realize the vision that was first laid out in dorm rooms across the country eight years ago. This year, our premier journals represent unique ideas from 83 authors at 30 different schools. As they go to press, our members are already translating those ideas into action by initiating petitions, collaborating with local partners and stakeholders, and lobbying on Capitol Hill.

Last year, we proudly presented the 10 Ideas series as a powerful reminder that this generation is not only willing to build a better future, but has already begun. This year, we put these solutions forward to demonstrate that members of this generation are in it for the long haul as part of an initiative that is always growing, always evolving, and always looking toward the future in the pursuit of progress.

Taylor Jo Isenberg  
National Director  
Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network



# WELCOME

**We are pleased to share** the fifth edition of the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network's flagship 10 Ideas series. These journals, encompassing the best student ideas from our six policy centers, are filled with game-changing public policy suggestions that we can and must implement now.

We are in desperate need of these ideas. Rising healthcare costs, increasing inequality, global climate change, and a government that often seems unable or unwilling to address the things that matter most are challenges that require the very best and the very brightest.

At the same time, we are told that Millennials are checked out, have lost interest, and are waiting for someone else to solve our problems. These journals are an answer to that narrative, making the clear case that we are engaged and active citizens, putting forward ideas to change the problems we see in the world around us. We believe in the power of people working together to solve problems.

Each year, the 10 Ideas journals provide a vision for change that addresses the needs of our neighborhoods, our cities, and our country. Working with community members, local nonprofits, professors, and lawmakers, these student authors have identified the policies that can make the most difference. Yet this journal represents just the tip of the iceberg, with many hours of organizing, researching, fundraising, and developing public campaigns hidden below the surface.

This year's Energy and Environment journal shows a focus on local engagement, reflecting a desire to move past a national dialogue that seems to have stalled. The Millennial generation isn't waiting for national legislation, instead engaging on a city or even collegiate level. Using their ideas to empower local communities to make change now, this journal looks to put the seemingly insurmountable issue of global climate change back in the hands of people who can act now.

Taken on its own, each idea is a simple solution. These journals and the 10 Ideas series taken together are a library of ideas that can help us build toward a more equal, accessible, and community-minded world.

Join us in seeing these ideas realized.

Alan Smith  
Program and Policy Director  
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# TIME FOR CONGRESS TO REPEAL THE HALLIBURTON LOOPHOLE

STEWART BOSS, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA - CHAPEL HILL

*Repealing the “Halliburton loophole” that exempts the hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) industry from compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act will reduce the environmental and public health threat of water contamination.*

A 2004 draft study on fracking by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) raised early concerns about dangerous levels of contaminants in fracking fluids and possible aquifer contamination, but the final report was altered due to industry and political pressure.<sup>1</sup> In 2005, Congress and President George W. Bush passed the Energy Policy Act, which largely exempted the fracking industry from regulation by the EPA’s Underground Injection Control program under the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA).<sup>2</sup>

## KEY FACTS

- Methane levels in drinking-water wells within a kilometer of active fracking sites were found to be, on average, 17 times higher than in wells farther away.
- Enacting strict environmental rules would only increase natural gas production costs by an estimated 7 percent.
- 66 percent of Americans support more regulation of fracking.

Congressional Democrats have increasingly embraced the need for strong federal regulation of fracking operations. Rep. Diana DeGette (D-Co.) and Sen. Bob Casey (D-Pa.) sponsored the Fracturing Responsibility and Awareness of Chemicals (FRAC) Act of 2011, which would remove the fracking exemption to the SDWA and give the EPA authority to regulate the injection of fracking fluids.<sup>3</sup> Although the bill attracted more than 80 Senate and House co-sponsors, it was stalled in committee and failed to attract significant Republican support.

## ANALYSIS

Concerns about water contamination have resulted in vocal opposition to the explosion—and lack of regulation—of fracking. Researchers at Duke University found that methane levels in drinking-water wells within a kilometer of active fracking sites in Pennsylvania and New York were, on average, 17 times higher than in wells farther away.<sup>4</sup> The International Energy Agency (IEA) reports that enacting strict environmental rules would only increase natural gas production costs by an estimated 7 percent.<sup>5</sup> Accepting this small increase in cost could assuage public concerns about the negative impacts of fracking.

Despite a barrage of advertising promoting natural gas, a December 2012 Bloomberg National Poll found that 66 percent of Americans support more rules for and government oversight of fracking.<sup>6</sup> The IEA warned that voters could increasingly turn against the fracking industry if its environmental and public health problems are not addressed.

But the EPA has already faced strong criticism from the oil and gas industry for using its remaining SDWA authority to move forward with regulations for fracking involving diesel fuels.<sup>7</sup> Industry groups like America’s Natural Gas Alliance oppose the FRAC Act and other federal regulations. Changing the SDWA fracking exemption will require overcom-

ing the political influence of the oil and gas industry, which spent nearly \$150 million on lobbying in 2011 and gave more than \$63 million in campaign contributions in the 2012 election cycle.<sup>8</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

Environmental and public health nonprofit groups should make it a top legislative priority for the 113th Congress to pass a bill that removes the Safe Drinking Water Act exemption for fracking. State government leaders who want strong fracking rules should also advocate for the federal government to address this issue. This will require building bipartisan support and launching a sustained public relations effort explaining why the risks of fracking do not merit a regulatory exemption. To build momentum for this legislation, President Barack Obama and his Cabinet should begin promoting a national dialogue about how to address growing concerns about the environmental, public health, and climate impacts of the shale gas revolution.

### TALKING POINTS

- Fracking enabled domestic unconventional shale gas to expand from 1 percent of the U.S. natural gas supply to over 20 percent in the decade 2000-2010.
- Scientific evidence indicates fracking can contaminate nearby groundwater and drinking water supplies with methane and dangerous fracking chemicals.
- Because of its negligible impact in lessening climate change, natural gas production replacing coal use should not be treated as a substitute for renewable energy production.

Research continues to show that switching from burning coal to natural gas does not have a meaningful impact on climate change.<sup>9</sup> Natural gas, which is still a fossil fuel, should replace existing coal use, but not at the expense of the deployment of clean renewable energy technologies. Protecting water supplies should be part of a broader effort to ensure that the fracking industry is required to fully absorb the direct and indirect costs of production.

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# RENEWABLE ENERGY CREDITS FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

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*New Jersey's current alternative energy policy disrupts the flow of capital between stakeholders, thereby undermining investment in renewable energy. By reversing this trend and realigning incentives, a new system can promote sustainable growth in the green energy sector.*

In recent years, the balance between stakeholders in the New Jersey electricity market (consumers, utilities, generators, and government)<sup>1</sup> has been disrupted by two legislative measures: Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) and Solar Renewable Energy Certificates (SRECs). RPS, adopted in 1999, requires utility companies to obtain a percentage of the electricity they sell from solar power.<sup>2</sup> In order to promote New Jersey's solar industry, the government created SRECs—certificates issued to solar panel installers as they generate electricity, then sold on an open market to utilities that need to fulfill the solar portion of their RPS.<sup>3</sup> These policies have produced several unintended consequences, including deflation of SREC prices and speculation in the solar market. To counter these effects, the government passed Bill S1925 to raise the solar-derived percentage of the RPS,<sup>4</sup> limit supply of solar power, and tighten restrictions on existing SREC-eligible installations.<sup>5</sup>

## ANALYSIS

The government must realign the incentives of the renewable energy market in two ways so market forces can regulate themselves.

First, the government should stop issuing post-installation energy certificates to producers and start selling ex-ante electricity credits to consumers, thereby accomplishing three things: turning RECs into a tangible commodity (electricity bought in advance); shifting demand for this commodity to the consumer, thereby ensuring it is sustained without legislative support; and freeing up capital for the expansion of electricity-generating capacity to meet the added demand.

Second, the government must reallocate this capital as a loan to generators to cover the cost of expanding renewable energy under the condition that part of the added capacity be reserved for the redemption of energy credits. This adjustment prevents over-speculation in the solar market and ensures supply rises in accordance with demand. Under this new policy, the government's role shifts from intervention to enforcement. Contracts establish the parameters of the market; the market determines the remaining factors.

### KEY FACTS

- The price of SRECs has dropped nearly 80 percent in the past year, preventing owners of solar panels from recovering the cost of installation.<sup>5</sup>
- NJ Government was forced to pass SB 1925 to artificially inflate demand for and limit supply of SRECs in attempt to reestablish market equilibrium.<sup>5</sup>
- Under SB1925, compensation for solar installations is capped at \$325 per SREC5, and solar installations are limited to 80MW per year starting in 2014.<sup>6</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

Upon establishing these parameters, the government can support the system in two ways: by minimizing the risk and cost of entry to each stakeholder and by maximizing the rate and level of return on their investment. By ensuring utility participation, the government can remove all obstacles to consumer involvement as well. While the utilities minimize the cost of entry themselves through the dispersion of risk among other stakeholders, the government can further reduce this barrier by offering a premium to utilities for each credit they redeem. The government should offer generator loans at a discounted rate, thereby completing the cycle of investment

and ensuring every party benefits from the transaction: Consumers receive electricity at a discounted price, utilities increase their profits through the redemption of electricity credits, generators expand their capacity at almost no cost to them, and the government receives a significant return on a loan without directly fronting any capital.

### TALKING POINTS

- Requiring generators to install panels before receiving and selling SRECs encourages speculation in solar market.
- The government should sell pre-production electricity credits rather than issuing post-installation energy certificates.
- By selling electricity to consumers in advance, the government frees up capital for investment in renewable energy.

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# THE LIFE CYCLE ASSESSMENT: THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY OF MEASURING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

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*The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency should establish an environmental standard based on life cycle assessments to better quantify the environmental impact of processes and materials.*

Many environmental policies are implemented without a full understanding of the environmental impact of the process or product that is being regulated, and standards often reduce one environmental impact at the expense of another. Most sustainable practices do lessen environmental impact, but they may not be reaching their full potential. For example, recycling is commonly regarded as sustainable because it reduces the amount of waste in landfills and reuses resources. However, the Trash Track program created by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found that some recyclable goods are trucked an average of 930 miles before reaching a recycling facility.<sup>1</sup> Recycling may reduce landfill waste and mining, but it can be at the expense of using unneeded energy to transport and process recycled materials.

Currently, there is no standard that assesses the entire environmental impact of a product or a process. The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standard and Energy Star are both excellent standards of environmental impact, but their scopes are limited to only a few kinds of environmental impact, such as energy use. Life cycle assessments (LCAs) could provide a more comprehensive environmental assessment and should be used to establish a new standard of environmental impact.

## ANALYSIS

A life cycle assessment refers to a cradle-to-grave approach to assessing environmental impact, including carbon footprint, water use, greenhouse gas emissions, and toxic materials associated with production, use, and disposal.<sup>5</sup> Creating a standard of environmental impact based on LCAs is a more effective way to evaluate environmental impact than carbon footprint, mineral use, or water use measures.

Conducting an LCA is currently costly and time-consuming because researchers must put significant effort into establishing a methodology and calculating environmental impacts of products that have not yet been studied. While the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has established a generic methodology for conducting an LCA, the available information is insufficient for a complex process. The EPA is in a perfect

### KEY FACTS

- European Commission concluded that life cycle assessments provide the best currently available framework for assessing the potential environmental impacts of products.<sup>2</sup>
- A study in Norway found that electric cars produce more toxic waste than conventional cars.<sup>3</sup> LCAs could be used to assess the relative environmental impact of electric cars versus other vehicles.
- The market for life cycle assessments is growing considerably, with life cycle technology vendors and consultants reporting growth rates of 30-40 percent.<sup>4</sup>

position to generate research regarding life cycle assessments to make it easier for institutions and businesses to conduct LCAs. Furthermore, there is no well-recognized standard for sustainability based on LCA, so organizations do not earn the recognition that they deserve when they effectively reduce their entire environmental impact using these assessments. A well-defined standard similar to LEED or Energy Star would provide increased prestige and a greater incentive for organizations to use LCAs.

## NEXT STEPS

The EPA must work with research institutes to determine the environmental impact of raw materials, agricultural products, and transportation and services. This information would be compiled into a database that would be accessible from the EPA website to be used by private industries, government agencies, and research institutes. The EPA would be responsible for designing LCA methodologies and guidelines for different types of assessments. While establishing the framework and data necessary to complete life cycle assessments would have an initial cost, the information would be useful to a wide variety of industries and allow them to systematically reduce environmental impact.

### TALKING POINTS

- Life cycle assessments can be applied to almost any industry, process, or product to determine its environmental impact.
- The more life cycle assessments are completed, the easier and cheaper it will be to conduct future life cycle assessments.
- LCA technology allows regulatory agencies and private industries to make more informed decisions regarding how to reduce their environmental impact.

Once there is more complete and publicly available LCA data, the EPA must establish standards for different industries and services regarding levels of environmental impact. These standards can then be used by regulatory agencies. Creating an environmental standard based on LCAs would also allow institutions that are reducing their environmental impact to earn the same prestige associated with LEED or Energy Star certification.

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# OPTIMIZING NYC PUBLIC SCHOOL ROOFTOPS TO PRODUCE SOLAR ENERGY

LAWRENCE HASELEY, CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK

*To combat budget cuts and rising electricity costs, New York City public schools should optimize the surface space of their rooftops by installing solar panels.*

In the years since the recession of 2008, there has been a budget crisis affecting New York City public schools. The city has the largest public school system in the country, with around 1.1 million students and 75,000 teachers.<sup>2</sup> It is facing budget cuts that decrease extracurricular programs, tutoring, and teachers, while class sizes have significantly increased since 2008.<sup>1,2</sup> New York State also has some of the highest energy costs in the nation, with two-thirds of its electricity coming from outside the city.<sup>3</sup> Rising energy costs in New York City put further strain on its public schools, decreasing the amount of funds available for school programs. In 2012, Mayor Michael Bloomberg promoted a series of New Energy projects called PlaNYC. To date, PlaNYC has built 10 solar panel systems on various agency buildings throughout the city.<sup>6</sup> The city should develop a renewable energy infrastructure for public schools to decrease energy costs.

## ANALYSIS

Budget reductions are requiring New York City public schools to use their resources more efficiently. Optimizing space is paramount in the city, and rooftops are an untapped space for producing energy. The production of solar panels in recent years have increased and costs have fallen by 58 percent since 2011.<sup>14</sup> Installing solar panels on New York City public schools would help New York State meet its goal of having 30 percent of its energy come from renewable energy by 2015.<sup>5</sup> Major investment banks have also invested in renewable energy. In 2012, Goldman Sachs announced it would invest \$40 billion in clean energy over the next decade.<sup>13</sup> The city's strong relationship with investment banks could aid in the development of its renewable energy infrastructure. The New York City Solar Map created by the City University of New York (CUNY) makes it possible to estimate how the city's roughly 1,700 public schools could optimize their roof space for solar energy.<sup>4</sup> The New York City Solar America City Partnership identified Greenpoint, Brooklyn, Staten Island's East Shore, and the Chelsea area of Manhattan, among other neighborhoods, as Solar Empowerment Benefit Zones.<sup>9</sup> These areas are estimated to produce the greatest amount of solar energy.<sup>9</sup> Producing solar energy on New York City public school rooftops will allow more opportunity to focus funds on school programs.

### KEY FACTS

- NYC Dept. of Education budget cuts are limiting funds available for school programs.<sup>1,8</sup>
- Electricity prices will continue to rise in NYC due to increasing demand.<sup>3</sup>
- New York State aims to produce 30 percent of its energy from renewable resources by 2015.<sup>5</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

New York City public schools should take advantage of grants and funds provided by government-sponsored organizations and private institutions. NYSERDA provides grants



to eligible installers of new grid-connected solar electric or photovoltaic systems.<sup>11</sup> NY-SERDA's Power Naturally Program pays up to 40 percent of the installed cost of a solar photovoltaic system and will be accepting applications through December 31, 2015.<sup>11,12</sup> The city's schools should also take advantage of the Solar Sales Tax Exemption, which exempts the purchase and installation of a solar system from sales tax.<sup>10</sup>

## TALKING POINTS

- The NYC Solar Map provides insight on how NYC public schools could best utilize their rooftop space for producing solar energy.<sup>1</sup>
- Funding for rooftop solar energy projects is available through federal, state, and private programs.<sup>7</sup>
- The reduction in energy costs for NYC Public Schools will allow more funds to be allocated to school programs.

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# PETROLEUM TO PANICUM VIRGATUM: SUBSIDIZING CLEANER ENERGIES

GABRIELLE LACHTRUP, MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE

*Redirecting subsidies for U.S. oil companies to finance bioethanol production can help meet sustainable energy needs while protecting global food supplies.*

In 2011, the five largest private sector oil companies made a record \$137 billion. Indeed, Exxon Mobil Corporation achieved net incomes of \$10 billion despite struggling to maintain levels of extraction comparable to previous decades.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, oil companies receive up to \$280 billion in annual taxpayer subsidies.<sup>5</sup> Worldwide, subsidies for petroleum fuel sources exceed those for renewable alternatives six times over, making it even more difficult to envision a sustainable energy future.<sup>6</sup>

## KEY FACTS

- Petroleum companies do not require subsidies to maintain current production levels.<sup>1</sup>
- Each metric ton of switchgrass, or *Panicum virgatum*, can produce approximately 100 gallons of bioethanol.<sup>2</sup>
- The production of bioethanol is carbon negative.<sup>3</sup>

Currently, the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) requires the production of 36 billion gallons of renewable fuel sources by 2022.<sup>7</sup> Thus far, this has primarily incentivized corn ethanol. During 2011 alone, more corn was used for ethanol production than for export or feeding livestock.<sup>8</sup> This use of arable farmland for fuel needs artificially inflates commodity prices and contributes to food insecurity worldwide. To avoid these problems, the federal government should invest in biofuel, also known as bioethanol. Bioethanol is energy derived from switchgrass and other grassland perennials that thrive in degraded soil.

## ANALYSIS

Heavy petroleum use in the production of corn ethanol results in substantial CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. By contrast, perennial grasses sequester large amounts of carbon dioxide, making bioethanol production carbon negative overall.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, such species add nutrients to depleted soil, allowing biofuel plots to be rotated for food crops as needed.<sup>10</sup>

Some tax credits for biofuel production do exist.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, due to limited funding for research and development, bioethanol has yet to reach the market. Thus, cost estimates for its large-scale production vary widely.<sup>12</sup> However, as oil production levels become increasingly difficult to maintain, the comparative ease of raising grassland perennials could help offset initial investments in new energy infrastructure.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, since biofuel can be used in developing products as diverse as diesel and jet fuel, it represents an economically versatile energy source.<sup>14</sup> Ending petroleum subsidies would provide a significant source of funding to investigate the issue further, thus helping to determine the expense of making bioethanol more widely available.

## NEXT STEPS

Continuing the production tax credit for bioethanol would allow a greater proportion of the RFS to be met with bioethanol.<sup>15</sup> More critically, passing S.2204, or the Repeal Big Oil

Tax Subsidies Act of 2012, would be a major step forward. The bill proposes eliminating over \$20 billion in annual federal subsidies to major oil companies.<sup>16</sup> This funding could then be redistributed to help finance further development of bioethanol for the domestic market.

## TALKING POINTS

- Funding for domestic oil companies can be invested in alternative energy research instead.
- Bioethanol has the potential to be cheaper, cleaner, and less detrimental to global food systems than corn ethanol.

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# EXPANSION OF THE NEW YORK RETURNABLE CONTAINER ACT

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*To encourage redemption and bring in further revenue, New York State should expand its Returnable Container Act to cover additional types of beverages and raise the refundable deposit.*

New York first passed the Returnable Container Act (RCA) in 1982, adding a 5-cent redeemable deposit to certain beverages, such as carbonated drinks and beer products. Redemption of this deposit, in turn, shrinks the contribution of bottles to the waste stream, which the RCA reduced by 70 percent.<sup>3</sup>

In 2009, New York passed a revised version of RCA, also known as the “Bottle Bill.” One year after its passage, New York collected over \$120 million in unredeemed deposits and registered 243 new redemption centers, despite the ailing economy.<sup>3,4</sup> Containers not covered under the RCA are either discarded in landfills, burned in incinerators, or recycled, usually at a cost to the state. For these reasons, the RCA should be expanded to include deposits on sweetened water, teas, non-carbonated juices, and sports drinks. New York should also raise the nickel deposit, worth only 2 cents in 2012 dollars, to a dime.<sup>5</sup> Only Michigan offers ten-cent deposits, and has the highest bottle redemption rate of any state, at an average of 97.27 percent.<sup>6</sup>

## KEY FACTS

- An estimated 5,000 jobs were created within a few years of New York’s first bottle deposit law in 1982.<sup>2</sup>
- The plastic industry estimates that PET plastic, largely used for beverage containers, has a recycling rate of only 30%.<sup>17</sup>
- Between August 2009 and November 2011, New York gained \$224.6 million in unclaimed deposits.<sup>18</sup>

## ANALYSIS

These additional refundable deposits would affect most consumers of beverages in New York State. One proposed alternative, a flat tax, is clearly nonrefundable, and only serves to transfer the problem from the industry to politicians and the public.<sup>7</sup> More deposits would not affect prices: the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection found that deposit and non-bottle deposit states have similar beverage prices, which are sometimes higher in states without such laws.<sup>8</sup> The added range of deposits and their increase to 10 cents is also expected to provide a healthier profit to redemption centers.<sup>9</sup>

Making up 4 to 58 percent of litter nationally, beverages are a consistent contributor to the waste stream.<sup>10</sup> If the expansion of the RCA does little to increase redemption, New York State will generate revenue, as 80 percent of unclaimed deposits are returned to the state.<sup>11</sup> Alternatively, if bottle redemption increases, litter and the number of beverages in the waste stream will subsequently decrease, saving the state money. The enactment of deposit laws in New York and Michigan resulted in 30 and 41 percent reductions in overall litter, respectively.<sup>2,12</sup>

An expanded bottle deposit law will leave the public with little to lose except trash. The many dollars saved by reducing our litter can go toward public services and slightly alleviating the precarious economic state of New York, which faces a 2013 budget shortfall of \$3.5 billion.<sup>13</sup> In the unlikely scenario that bottle redemption does not increase, the savings gained on unclaimed deposits can help support New York's recycling program. While fraudulent redemption by non-New Yorkers may increase, this can be prevented with use of state-specific labels on bottles readable by redemption centers.

#### TALKING POINTS

- Bottle bills are both strongly approved by the majority of residents in deposit and non-deposit states.<sup>19</sup>
- New York faces a 2013 projected deficit of \$3.5 billion.
- New York City alone spent \$300 million dollars in 2011 exporting its garbage.<sup>20</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

New Yorkers and Roosevelt chapter members should communicate with organizations in favor of deposit laws and the benefits they produce, such as the Sierra Club and Association of Postconsumer Plastic Recyclers. Local politicians must also be met to acquaint them with the issue and gain their endorsement of the legislative bills introduced.

Input from the community and independent sources will be essential to a fair discussion of the bill. In 2011, groups in New York spent \$220 million lobbying politicians.<sup>14</sup> Beverage companies and associations against the bill are expected to lobby key committee members to support their interests. In Massachusetts, opponents successfully blocked a recent bottle bill expansion despite approval by 208 of 351 municipalities and 77 percent of the public.<sup>15,16</sup> Legal action is also possible to help delay the process.

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# WATERSHED MANAGEMENT FOR HEALTHIER, CHEAPER URBAN WATER

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*The rising cost of water treatment centers inhibits the financial health of growing urban centers. Instead, municipalities should invest in watershed protection management strategies with an emphasis on payment services.*

Less than 1 percent of the water on Earth is potable and accessible for human consumption.<sup>1</sup> Increasing industrial, agricultural, and household consumption threatens the sustainability of overexploited water resources. For urban centers, providing ample water for human needs without compromising quality or quantity for future generations is a growing concern. Currently, municipalities invest in expensive, end-of-the-pipeline water treatment centers, while few invest in water conservation projects.

Proactively protecting and rebuilding the health of watersheds can ensure access to healthy, affordable water reserves without costly treatment centers. A study of U.S. waterways indicated that the presence of 60 percent forest cover decreases water treatment costs by half.<sup>2</sup> New York City successfully uses a multi-faceted legal agreement with upstream watershed communities at a cost of \$1.5 billion in order to avoid a loss of \$6 billion in capital costs and an annual \$300 million in water treatment costs.<sup>2</sup>

While the agreement activates several different micro-strategies to achieve upstream community buy-in, the primary strategy is called a “payments-for-ecosystem-services” (PES) program, in which beneficiaries of a natural system pay landowners who maintain the existence and well-being of that system. Economic surveys provide a pricing structure based on the estimated worth of each ecosystem service. This exchange of monies creates a mutual investment in maintaining the ecosystem and a market incentive to protect a social good.

Many countries, such as Costa Rica, have already instituted PES programs. Costa Rican national forestry laws incentivize forest conservation on private land by paying landowners for the ecosystem services provided, in particular the hydrological services.<sup>2</sup> Regular payments create not only a disincentive for deforestation on private land, but also an incentive for expanding reforestation and conservation projects.

## ANALYSIS

The strategies employed by New York City and Costa Rica have wide-ranging applications in municipalities nationwide. Collaborative partnerships between city, state, and

### KEY FACTS

- Watersheds provide ecosystem services including water filtration, regeneration of water reserves, flood control, soil maintenance, and nursery habitats.<sup>2</sup>
- Conventional water treatment strategies are limited in efficacy and exponential in costs.
- Protecting watersheds provides a cheaper alternative for securing clean water.
- UV disinfectant technology is affordable and effective.<sup>3</sup>

federal programs could improve waterway health by promoting conservation efforts on private lands. Additionally, PES programs would incentivize the reduction of agricultural run-off and other harmful water pollutants. UV-ray disinfection centers may still be necessary for immediate regulation of water quality, although they are significantly less expensive than traditional treatment centers.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, PES programs requires long-term cooperation. Federal standards and frameworks have proven essential to this process; without the U.S. Safe Drinking Water Act, New York City's governing bodies had little incentive to seek mechanisms for ensuring water quality.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, it was a federal program in Costa Rica that generated a viable market for ecosystem services, thereby economically incentivizing the preservation of natural resources for the common and individual good.<sup>2</sup>

#### TALKING POINTS

- Water resources are limited in quantity and quality.
- Conventional methods of buying up water rights and investing in expensive treatment centers is more expensive than collaborative watershed protection and management programs.
- New York City's and Costa Rica's payment-for-services programs are successful and replicable.

#### NEXT STEPS

Any municipality considering investing in watershed management in order to maintain water quality and quantity, all while cutting long-term costs, should invest in the following steps:

- 1) Conduct a comprehensive study comparing current costs and future costs based on several different scenarios of conventional water treatment and extraction mechanisms, watershed management, and UV treatment centers.
- 2) Host town hall-style meetings to share the study's findings with the general public, business leaders, constituents, and other stakeholders.
- 3) Craft the most immediate policy first. In many cases, this most likely will be the payment of ecosystem services in order to encourage immediate conservation and reforestation efforts.

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# SUSTAINABLE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR CONFLICT RELIEF

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*The United States should implement a large-scale irrigation rehabilitation program in Afghanistan.*

Three decades of conflict have wreaked havoc on Afghanistan's infrastructure, economy, and general society, all of which will require extensive time and money to address. Tackling these issues will require recognition of the severe environmental constraints of Afghanistan. In particular, reconstruction will need to focus on a vital resource that is scarce in the Afghan climate: water. Ensuring access to water is important in a country where 80 percent of the population is dependent on agriculture, and 2.5 million people are affected by drought or water shortages.

No panacea exists to solve all of Afghanistan's problems, but one potential solution is to allocate U.S. aid resources toward improving irrigation. About two-thirds of the country's farmland is irrigated, and only about half of those irrigation systems are in good condition.<sup>1</sup> Repairing the broken irrigation systems on 1.7 million hectares of farmland would provide a great boost to the well-being of the Afghani population by increasing its water and food security.

## ANALYSIS

Irrigation projects have already been successful in Afghanistan. USAID, Japan, and other countries and NGOs have already performed small-scale irrigation building and improvement projects.<sup>5,6</sup> One USAID program found that farmers' land value increased by four or five times due to the great increase in crop production.<sup>7</sup>

Considering the length of other large irrigation rehabilitation projects, combined with the unique security and infrastructure challenges posed by the country, Afghanistan's irrigation systems could likely be rehabilitated in eight years.<sup>8</sup> Determining the cost of the project is difficult, again due to the country's poor development and security. However, a rough estimate of \$3 billion can be obtained by examining the cost of irrigation projects in neighboring Pakistan, which has comparable climate and material costs.<sup>9,10</sup> The additional costs due to security needs and poor infrastructure could run at least as high as \$2 billion for an eight-year project.<sup>11,12,13,14,15</sup> \$5 billion dollars over eight years is a large number, especially for USAID, but is reasonable compared to the \$7 billion per month spent by the U.S. Department of Defense in Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup>

### KEY FACTS

- 80 percent of Afghanistan is dependent on agriculture.<sup>2</sup>
- 44 percent of Afghans are dissatisfied with the availability of water for irrigation, and many view international NGOs positively.<sup>3</sup>
- For \$5 billion, all of Afghanistan's irrigation systems in disrepair could be rehabilitated.<sup>4</sup>

Addressing the environmental issues of Afghanistan could also improve physical security



in Afghanistan. While security can benefit from overall economic improvement, it can also be more directly influenced by a reduction in poppy farming. Poppies require little water to grow, so farmers tend to turn to the crop when they experience water issues. The crop is a major source of funds for the Taliban since they are the only ones who will market the illegal product.<sup>17</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

There are many potential avenues for this plan to become reality, but the best start is to reach out to USAID's Afghanistan division.<sup>18</sup> USAID already has experience with irrigation improvement in the country and would be able to refine the project into an actionable proposal for approval by Congress and the Obama administration. USAID could then implement the project, likely on a province-by-province basis. The agency would need to expand its administrative staff and hire construction contractors tailored to the type of work required for each locality. The project would require work ranging from repairing major public works such as the Dahla Dam to clearing sediment from farmers' canals and would accordingly require different types of materials and labor.<sup>19</sup> Ideally, at the end of eight years, Afghanistan would see great improvements to its economy due to increased crop yields from efficient and effective irrigation systems.

## TALKING POINTS

- Afghanistan is in serious need of improved water accessibility.
- Given the country's dependence on agriculture, improved irrigation would be a good way to improve water accessibility, physical security, and general well-being.

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# LIVING WAGE INSURANCE: A TRUE AGRICULTURAL SAFETY NET



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*Farm Bill legislation should limit crop insurance payouts to incidences of natural disaster and cap all crop insurance payouts at a state-based living wage, regardless of farm size or growing practice.*

Crop subsidization began in the 1920s with the McNary-Haugen Bill.<sup>1</sup> While this bill was vetoed, it laid the groundwork for President Herbert Hoover's Farm Board,<sup>2</sup> which fixed price floors for wheat and cotton. Thus, if market prices fell below a set price, the federal government would buy the crop, pay to store it, and hope to resell it later for a decent return. The Farm Board, as anticipated in the McNary-Haugen veto, had disastrous unintended consequences. Farmers who typically grew other crops shifted to wheat and cotton because they were federally protected. The ramifications of this are still visible today, with heavily subsidized corn and soy featured in almost every product in the typical grocery store. The 1996 Freedom to Farm Act pulled the federal government out of price supports and grain management in an effort to phase out farm subsidies.<sup>3</sup> This was not the case. Instead, the act resulted in direct payment subsidy programs and an agricultural paradigm that remains heavily reliant on subsidies for continued production. By creating a crop insurance model that guarantees farmers an annual living wage in the event of disaster, subsidies can be returned to their original intended purpose of ensuring a livelihood for American farmers while protecting a healthful food supply.

## KEY FACTS

- The agricultural industry in the United States is predicated upon the subsidization of "commodity crops," such as wheat, corn, soybeans, and peanuts.
- Federal subsidies were meant to provide a "safety net" to agricultural producers to help ensure a livable income and a stable food supply.
- Despite the rhetoric of "preserving the family farm," present subsidies favor the largest producers while neglecting the smallest growers.
- Present subsidies do not protect the food supply, but instead saturate the market with low-nutrient commodity crops that cannot adequately feed a nation.

## ANALYSIS

The 2012 Farm Bill eliminates direct payment subsidies in their entirety. However, the legislation merely diverts that money toward crop insurance payouts to the same large commodity crop growers.<sup>4</sup> Additional reform proposals, such as the Rural Agriculture Preservation Act (S. 2217),<sup>5</sup> seek to cap subsidy payments at too high a level rather than at a livable income. This proposal seeks to reduce the cap to a living wage, determined according to state-by-state cost of living estimates,<sup>6</sup> and change it from a subsidy to actual crop disaster insurance. Using the EPA<sup>7</sup> estimates of 2 million operating U.S. farms and a livable farm income of \$47,000 a year for a family of four, it is possible to approximate likely spending for living-wage crop insurance in a disaster year, in which 15 percent of farmers nationally lose all of their crops, at \$14 billion. A year with minimal natural disasters would result in a much lower payout. The spending differential is clear; with such a structure in place, likely expenditures in a typical year would be \$10-20 billion lower than current levels. There is po-

tential to reallocate this surplus spending toward training in sustainable, polycultural growing practices that would help farmers increase income and long-term viability. This spending can be set to expand and contract based on crop insurance payouts in that particular year, not to exceed the lower end (\$14 billion a year) of present subsidy payouts. For example, a year with \$4.7 billion in insurance payouts may allow for up to \$9.3 billion in sustainability training program investments. The formation of a true agricultural safety net has profound implications for the equitable distribution of federal funding to all farmers. Subsidies were intended to protect the American food supply by ensuring the continued existence of farmers, who literally risk losing the farm in the event of natural disaster.<sup>8</sup> Creating a system of living wage crop insurance will provide a safety net for farmers of all sizes and growing practices rather than increase the profit of the largest few at the expense of the majority. Support for comprehensive agricultural insurance reform will come from consumers and taxpayers, who will benefit from a more nutritious food supply and will see fewer of their tax dollars going to subsidy payments. Small farmers and young farmers also hold a significant stake, since eliminating unfair market competition and providing funded sustainability training will reduce the insurmountable competition that enormous subsidized tract farms presently pose.

#### TALKING POINTS

- Federal agricultural subsidies cost taxpayers \$261.9 billion from 1995-2010, or approximately \$17.5 billion per year.
- A mere 10 percent of all American farmers—who represent America's largest growers—collected 74 percent of all subsidies.
- Comprehensive crop insurance reform capping insurance payouts at a living wage for farmers reduces overall subsidy spending and allows funds to be redirected towards small-scale sustainable farming.

## NEXT STEPS

While the Rural Agriculture Preservation Act (S. 2217) sought to create a hard cap on commodity payments so that no farm could receive more than \$250,000 per year in farm subsidies, legislators could build on this platform for change by capping payments at a living wage and not limiting payment eligibility to commodity growers alone. This would necessitate the redefining of crop types—presently, grains and pulses (primarily) are commodities, and fruits and vegetables are “specialty crops.” All edible crops should be redefined as what they are—crops—and thus made eligible. Major lobbying, and maybe even a public relations or ad campaign, will be necessary to put grassroots pressure on legislators to support this shift despite the money big commodity growers can throw at them. Additionally, to ensure that this policy is implemented without resistance from the private sector, crop insurance companies would need to be involved in shaping the legislation.

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# CLEAN AIR RESOLUTION: HOW CITY HALL CAN HELP IMPLEMENT A NATIONAL SOLUTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE



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*Ithaca should join 36 other cities across the country in passing a resolution urging the EPA to more aggressively fulfill its responsibility to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the Clean Air Act.*

Climate change poses a profound threat to long-term environmental, economic, agricultural, and geopolitical stability. As the concentration of greenhouse gases (GHGs) rises and traps heat in the atmosphere, humans expose themselves to a variety of catastrophic consequences. Scientists agree, however, that the worst effects can be mitigated if the concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) stabilizes below 350 parts per million (ppm).<sup>1</sup> Despite the scientific consensus, Congress has failed to implement comprehensive climate change legislation. Given partisan gridlock, future congressional action is improbable. Therefore, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) should use its authority under the Clean Air Act (CAA) to cap atmospheric concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> at 350 ppm. Cities around the country are adopting resolutions to urge the EPA to do so, and Ithaca, NY should be the next to adopt such a resolution.

In 2009, the House of Representatives passed an ambitious bill that would have established a cap and trade system to reduce GHG emissions, but the Senate failed to muster enough votes to send the bill to the president's desk.

Since 2009, the fossil fuel industry has spent over \$552 million in lobbying expenditures and campaign contributions to push climate change off of the political agenda.<sup>2</sup> Their efforts paid off: there have been no new promising climate bills proposed in Congress. Americans do not, however, have to rely on Congress. Section 111 of the CAA “requires EPA to develop regulations for categories of sources which cause or significantly contribute to air pollution which may endanger public health or welfare.”<sup>3</sup> In 2007 the Supreme Court ruled GHGs are indeed “pollutants,” and as such, the EPA must regulate them if they endanger public health or welfare.<sup>4</sup> In 2009, the EPA issued that endangerment finding and began to regulate GHG emissions from vehicles and some large stationary sources. But the EPA has missed many opportunities to use the CAA more ambitiously and urgently for a greater array of stationary sources.

## KEY FACTS

- The worst effects of climate change be mitigated if the concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) stabilizes below 350 parts per million (ppm).<sup>1</sup>
- Section 111 of the Clean Air Act (CAA) gives the EPA the authority to “develop regulations for categories of sources which... significantly contribute to air pollution which may endanger public health or welfare.”<sup>2</sup>

The CAA gives the EPA the authority to set limits on GHG emissions in three ways.<sup>5</sup> Through the New Source Review and New Source Performance Programs, the EPA can

require all new or modified “stationary” air pollution sources to limit emissions by installing pollution-control technologies and set standards for the maximum amount of pollutants emitted.<sup>6,7</sup> And under the National Ambient Air Quality Standards Program (NAAQSP), the EPA can determine the maximum acceptable atmospheric levels of different air pollutants that threaten “public welfare.”<sup>8</sup>

While the EPA has taken advantage of the first two programs to regulate GHGs, it has done so only tepidly and partially. Furthermore, despite the consensus that 350 ppm is the maximum admissible atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentration, the EPA has not yet codified that standard as an NAAQS.

## ANALYSIS

Every day the EPA delays full implementation of GHG regulations, the climate crisis worsens. That is why 36 cities signed resolutions urging the EPA to fully employ and enforce the CAA to reduce atmospheric carbon to 350 ppm. These cities include Albany, NY, Detroit, MI, and Gary, IN.

Ithaca should be next. While this action will have no effect on actual city policy, passing a resolution and forwarding a copy to the EPA sends an important signal that cities support more decisive action. This message will provide a counterweight to the hundreds of millions of dollars fossil fuel companies have spent opposing climate policy.

### TALKING POINTS

- 36 cities have signed resolutions urging the EPA to fully employ and enforce the Clean Air Act to reduce atmospheric carbon to 350 ppm.
- Ithaca should also sign a resolution to send an important signal that cities support more decisive action on climate change.

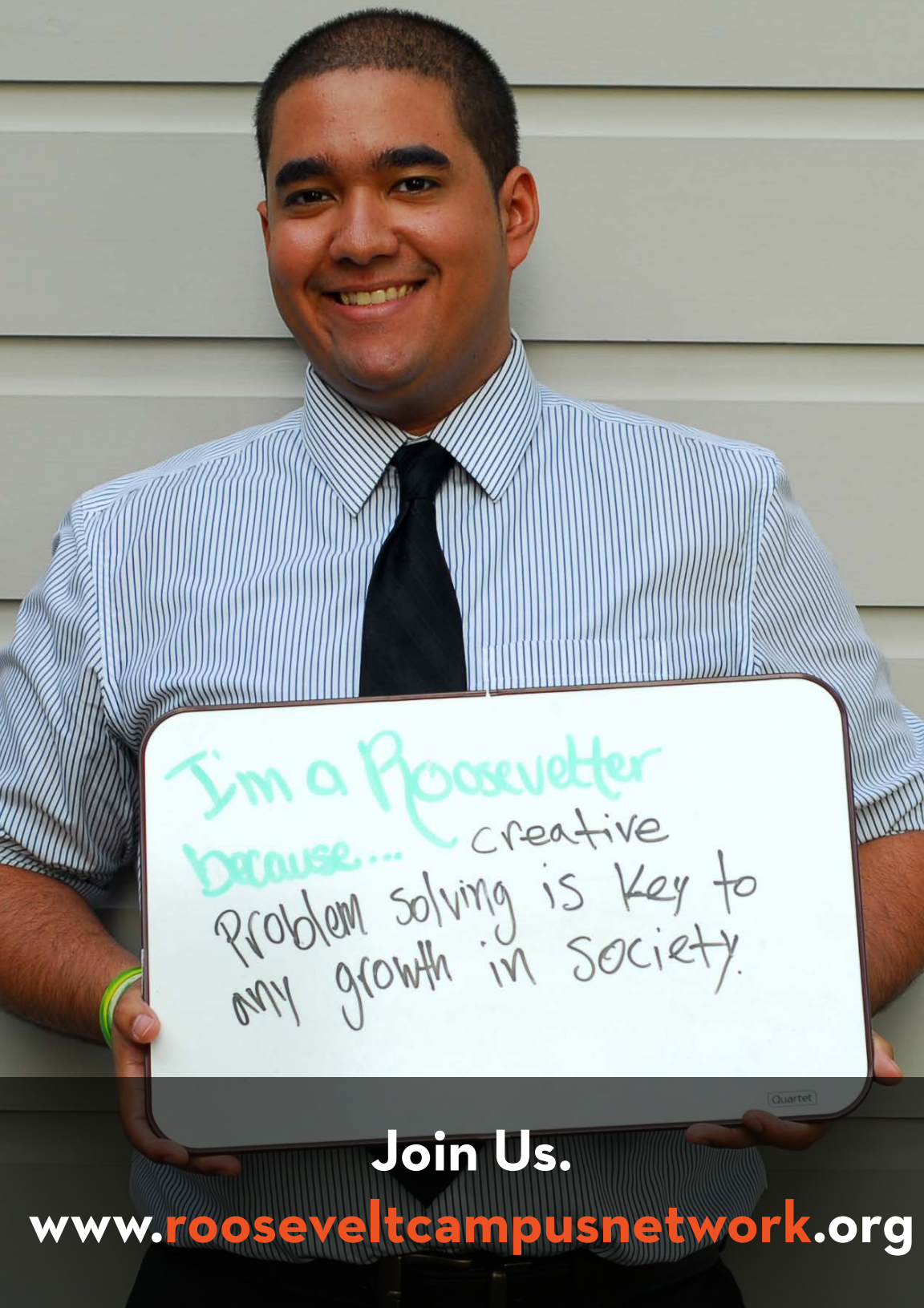
## NEXT STEPS

Thanks to the help of the Center for Biological Diversity’s Clean Air Cities Campaign, the resolution language is complete. Next we will contact city council members and lobby them to support the resolution at the next council meeting.

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LGBTQ RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND  
THE PRISON ABOLISHMENT MOVEMENT  
*POLICY OF THE YEAR NOMINEE*

# 10 IDEAS *for* EQUAL JUSTICE

# ROOSEVELT

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**10 IDEAS  
FOR  
EQUAL JUSTICE**



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ERIK LAMPMANN  
*author of*  
LGBTQ RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND  
THE PRISON ABOLITIONISM MOVEMENT

*Nominee for*  
POLICY OF THE YEAR

You will see pieces scattered throughout this document that connect directly to the Government By and For Millennial America project, the recent initiative from the Campus Network that projects the values of this generation onto the systems of American government, and seeks to imagine and then build an ideal version of what our government can - and must - be. Marked by this logo,



these pieces represent the sort of ideas that fit within the structure our Millennial vision for government. They are focused and specific plans for change that can make government more innovative, more engaging, and more democratic.

To learn more about the Government By and For project, please visit our website [www.rooseveltcampusnetwork.org](http://www.rooseveltcampusnetwork.org).

## **THE ROOSEVELT INSTITUTE CAMPUS NETWORK**

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# LETTER FROM NEW YORK CITY

**The Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network** was established in 2004 in response to the deep and pervasive sense that young people were overlooked in the policymaking process – that we could put boots on the ground and donate what little money we had to support leaders that promoted our progressive values, but our ideas, opinions, and priorities were not represented in our public discourse or electoral system. It was this realization and subsequent rejection of the status quo that led to the founding of what is now the nation's largest student policy organization.

That original purpose has endured as the Campus Network has grown to over 100 chapters. Yet at a recent gathering, one of our top leaders noted that the challenges we face in the wake of the 2012 election are similar to the ones that first brought us together. We are increasingly powerful actors in our public debates, but despite the bold ideas and ambitious agendas we've envisioned, designed, supported, and fought for, we are still beholden to a political process more focused on scoring partisan points than moving our country forward.

What emerged from that moment of collective reflection was the recognition of our unrealized potential as a movement. While our members' student-generated ideas and solutions-oriented action have redefined youth participation in the political process, it will take constant renewal and commitment to fresh ideas, rigorous engagement, and long-term action to achieve what we know is possible.

The 2013 10 Ideas series represents that ongoing effort to build the infrastructure, communities, and platforms that will allow us to realize the vision that was first laid out in dorm rooms across the country eight years ago. This year, our premier journals represent unique ideas from 83 authors at 30 different schools. As they go to press, our members are already translating those ideas into action by initiating petitions, collaborating with local partners and stakeholders, and lobbying on Capitol Hill.

Last year, we proudly presented the 10 Ideas series as a powerful reminder that this generation is not only willing to build a better future, but has already begun. This year, we put these solutions forward to demonstrate that members of this generation are in it for the long haul as part of an initiative that is always growing, always evolving, and always looking toward the future in the pursuit of progress.

Taylor Jo Isenberg  
National Director  
Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network



# WELCOME

**We are pleased to share** the fifth edition of the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network's flagship 10 Ideas series. These journals, encompassing the best student ideas from our six policy centers, are filled with game-changing public policy suggestions that we can and must implement now.

We are in desperate need of these ideas. Rising healthcare costs, increasing inequality, global climate change, and a government that often seems unable or unwilling to address the things that matter most are challenges that require the very best and the very brightest.

At the same time, we are told that Millennials are checked out, have lost interest, and are waiting for someone else to solve our problems. These journals are an answer to that narrative, making the clear case that we are engaged and active citizens, putting forward ideas to change the problems we see in the world around us. We believe in the power of people working together to solve problems.

Each year, the 10 Ideas journals provide a vision for change that addresses the needs of our neighborhoods, our cities, and our country. Working with community members, local non-profits, professors, and lawmakers, these student authors have identified the policies that can make the most difference. Yet this journal represents just the tip of the iceberg, with many hours of organizing, researching, fundraising, and developing public campaigns hidden below the surface.

This year's Equal Justice journal showcases the vast range of policy ideas that can fall under the umbrella of social justice. We seek to expand FDR's vision when he said, "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have little." We include a definition of enough that goes beyond simple economic means. From the rights of interns to increasing disability awareness, these ideas improve our society by leveling the playing field for all. One particularly strong theme in this year's journal is the value this generation places on equality for all citizens, particularly LGBTQ individuals. From changing restrictive or exclusory legislation to reevaluating the effectiveness of federal hate crime laws, this generation is working to ensure that everyone can live freely.

Taken on its own, each idea is a simple solution. These journals and the 10 Ideas series taken together are a library of ideas that can help us build toward a more equal, accessible, and community-minded world.

Join us in seeing these ideas realized.

Alan Smith  
Program and Policy Director  
Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network

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# ENDING THE EXCLUSION OF DRUG FELONS FROM SOCIAL SERVICE PROGRAMS

LUCAS DODGE, CORNELL UNIVERSITY

*Affirming the right of equal access to TANF and SNAP for otherwise eligible felony drug offenders would save money, reduce recidivism and drug abuse, and contain punishment to the criminal justice system.*

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamp Program) are federally funded, state-administered social assistance programs aimed at combating poverty. TANF offers cash assistance and social programs, such as childcare and subsidized jobs to low-income households with children. TANF serves as a “safety net” during periods of unemployment or underemployment and seeks to reduce the dependency of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.<sup>1</sup> SNAP provides low-income households with electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards to use at point of sale for food purchases. Households receive different monthly allocations depending on income, assets, and disability status.<sup>2</sup>

## KEY FACTS

- TANF and SNAP are federal poverty-alleviation programs administered by the states.
- Since 1996, federal law has mandated that felony drug offenders face a lifetime ban on TANF and SNAP benefits, but it allows states to opt out of or modify the ban.
- Such a ban does not apply to any other class of felony offenders.

Since the beginning of social assistance programs in the United States, economic need and moral character have primarily determined eligibility. Today, this manifests as a lifetime ban on TANF and SNAP benefits for felony drug offenders.<sup>3</sup>

In 1996, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) was signed into law. PRWORA mandated that felony drug sentences carry the additional punishment of a lifetime ban on TANF and SNAP benefits; however, states may opt out of or modify the ban.<sup>4</sup> Since 1996, 13 states have opted out of the ban on TANF benefits and 26 states have chosen to modify it. Nineteen states have opted out of the ban on SNAP benefits, while another 19 have modified it.<sup>5</sup>

## ANALYSIS

Disqualifying felony drug offenders from TANF and SNAP eligibility presents three primary issues that can be solved by lifting the ban. First, the current policy blurs the limits of punishment by rendering social assistance programs a tool of the penal system. It expands the length of punishment beyond the end of sentence time and extends the scope of punishment to other members of the household. Consequently, otherwise eligible individuals are routinely denied vital food and economic assistance.<sup>6</sup> Between 55 and 63 percent of prisoners have at least one dependent child.<sup>7</sup>

Second, restricting felony drug offenders’ access to social assistance programs creates unnecessary barriers to reintegration and rehabilitation, increasing the likelihood of drug

relapse and recidivism.<sup>8</sup> According to the New York State Bar Association, the restrictions under PRWORA may be the greatest barrier to re-entry that felony drug offenders face.<sup>9</sup> Since the purpose of TANF and SNAP is to support individuals in their efforts to become more productive members of society, lifting the lifetime ban for felony drug offenders would ensure more successful post-incarceration transitions for these individuals, who may lack steady income. No other class of felony offenders is denied access to these social assistance programs.

Third, the current policy is not cost-effective. Incarceration and social service administrative costs vary among states; however, the former is consistently more expensive. Promoting drug- and crime-free behavior through social assistance programs costs significantly less than re-incarceration. In California, the expenses associated with re-incarcerating one individual are comparable to those of administering EBT cards to 163 households.<sup>10</sup>

#### TALKING POINTS

- The current policy blends the criminal justice and social service systems such that punishment is extended to additional members of the household and services are denied to those in need.
- Post-incarceration re-entry into society is a difficult process, aggravated by barriers to food and economic assistance. This increases the likelihood of drug relapse and recidivism.
- PRWORA reflects a “tough on drugs” ideology at the expense of objective cost-benefit analysis; it does not save money or prevent drug use.

#### NEXT STEPS

Congress should repeal the federal law mandating a lifetime ban on TANF and SNAP benefits for felony drug offenders. With bipartisan support,<sup>11</sup> it should pass legislation rendering the restrictions null and void in each state. Alternatively, PRWORA could be challenged in a court of law, and the court could then declare it unconstitutional.

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# AMENDING THE GENDER REASSIGNMENT PROCESS

SAMUEL HAMMOND, WHEATON COLLEGE

*In order to grant transgender people equal rights and ease the transition process, states should not use proof of completed gender reassignment surgery as a requirement for individuals to legally change their gender.*

Current laws in all states require transgender individuals to provide proof that they have completed gender reassignment surgery in order to amend the gender on their birth certificates. This law creates obstacles for transgender individuals to alter other forms of legal ID and to receive benefits such as the right to marry a member of the opposite sex and the ability to pass as their new gender. However, the government can modify these laws to allow transgendered individuals to change their gender on their birth certificates with a letter of approval from either a licensed physician or a psychiatrist. This change would allow for greater legal recognition of the transgender population and expand their rights to protect them from potential discrimination.

In April 2012, the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario ruled that transgendered citizens could change the gender on their birth certificates without completing gender reassignment surgery.<sup>1</sup> The tribunal made the ruling in order to expand and protect the rights of transgendered citizens as well as to allow the government to achieve a more accurate count of the country's population.

## KEY FACTS

- Gender reassignment surgery, including therapy and hormone treatments, can cost between \$30,000 and \$80,000.<sup>3</sup>
- An estimated 52 percent of male-to-female and 42 percent of female-to-male transgender individuals lack health insurance.<sup>4</sup>

## ANALYSIS

The current system of laws and regulations requires that transgender individuals have a gender reassignment surgery before they can change their gender status. This requirement is a significant barrier for many because the surgery is expensive. The American Society of Plastic Surgeons estimated that a completed sex reassignment surgery, including the operation, therapy, and hormone injections, would cost between \$30,000 and \$80,000.<sup>2</sup> The decision not to undergo surgery is often defined by factors outside of personal preference. Many transgendered youth are cut off from their families and their families' health insurance, and many transgendered citizens cannot afford or are forced to delay surgery as a result of high costs and lack of medical insurance. Thus, because of these legal requirements, low-income transgender Americans are disproportionately barred from having their birth certificates match their gender identification.

A birth certificate that reflects the gender identification of a transgender citizen is critical to using other government benefits. Many different forms of identification, such as a passport, are based on the birth certificate. The government can help to streamline a complex process and accurately represent the lives of its citizens by altering how individuals can have their correct gender legally recognized. Transgender citizens need to work closely with both physicians and psychiatrists before they can begin the long process of sex reassignment. These physicians and psychiatrists are in a position to make a

well-informed and professional evaluation of when a patient is ready and able to have the gender on his or her birth certificate legally changed.

Legally changing their gender would allow transgendered individuals to marry members of the opposite sex and obtain all the legal rights that entails. Changing this policy would also increase transgender individuals' rights and safety by protecting them from potential discrimination. Many pre-op transgender individuals face the possibility of stigmatization and discrimination when their legal IDs reflect a gender that is different from how they present themselves.

### TALKING POINTS

- Many individuals are unable to have a gender reassignment surgery or must delay the procedure because of the costs and risks of the surgery.
- Requiring individuals to complete gender reassignment surgery in order to change the gender on their birth certificates creates a huge barrier to passing as their gender, getting married, and changing other forms of legal ID, such as passports and driver's licenses.

### NEXT STEPS

The decision to alter the process of amending a birth certificate can be made on either the state or federal level, so elected leaders in both divisions should amend existing law to allow a transgender individual to change his or her birth certificate based on a letter from a licensed physician or psychiatrist.

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# LGBTQ RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND THE PRISON ABOLITIONISM MOVEMENT

ERIK LAMPMANN, UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND

*Queer movements should deconstruct the role of hate crimes legislation that entrenches the prison-industrial complex and advocate instead for restorative practices that strengthen communities, protect LGBTQ constituencies in the long term, and avoid violent penal procedures.*

The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009 formed the cornerstone of the Obama administration's commitment to LGBTQ people. The Act criminalized targeted violence or harassment of individuals based on their gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability status.<sup>1</sup> Acknowledged in the mainstream media as a sign of a changing "cultural climate" for queer people living in the United States, the Act became law after a decade of sustained activism and lobbying by LGBTQ people for the additional protection provided categories like "race, color, religion, or national origin."<sup>2</sup>

Society must come to the defense of victims of homophobic and racist violence. However, the implementation of this brand of hate crimes legislation fails to destabilize the dominant logic around punishment, rehabilitation, and ingrained bias. Instead, it reinforces the logic that violence administered through imprisonment under hate crimes legislation will eradicate prejudice.<sup>3</sup>

Yet the criminal justice system has been fighting violence with violence for decades to no avail. Incarceration rates continue to increase,<sup>4</sup> and the prison system still engages in structural violence against many already marginalized people. It disproportionately incarcerates queer people, people of color, and other oppressed groups. The advent of the modern prison-industrial complex (PIC)<sup>5</sup> has only exacerbated this problem.

It seems intuitive that a just penal system would avoid re-populating these unjust prisons rather than support their expansion. The question then becomes how to engage best with offenders of biased and homophobic crimes. This can be done outside of the PIC through another paradigm: the field of restorative justice,<sup>7</sup> a practice that engages offenders, victims, and their personal networks in sustained, constructive dialogue and community-building after an incident.

## ANALYSIS

Instead of inflating prison populations, society must seek to understand the ways that violence is perpetrated against queer people. The Act reads: "A prominent characteristic

### KEY FACTS

- Restorative justice is the practice of promoting healing and mutual understanding between offenders and victims as an alternative to incarceration.
- Opposing forms of oppression and structural violence necessitates that queer folks also oppose the PIC and its effects on hate crimes offenders.
- The use of restorative justice as an alternative to incarceration has been overlooked by Congress and mainstream activist groups.

of a violent crime motivated by bias is that it devastates not just the actual victim and the family and friends of the victim, but frequently savages the community sharing the traits that caused the victim to be selected.”<sup>8</sup> Congress understood this bill to be its first attempt to engage communities damaged by bias and violence. It’s time for Congress to do more, to develop new tools to combat prejudice and reform the prison system. This is not to say that the brutal executions of Matthew Shepard or James Byrd, Jr. should be forgotten, rendered less significant, or co-opted. Rather, it is to say that the saying, “Crime wounds ... Justice heals”<sup>9</sup> requires a new form of justice, one that refuses to incarcerate more and more Americans, combats the roots of prejudice, and heals our communities.

## NEXT STEPS

Progressives must approach hate crimes as the result of a broken civil society. To make progress on the issue of prejudiced crimes, we need to expand crime prevention measures within communities to build social solidarity. This means expanding funding to programs that offer community centers, voluntary associations, schools, and individuals the budgets necessary to have difficult conversations on intersectionality, justice, and social justice. Secondly, this means investing in alternatives to incarceration at the level of sentencing (such as the UK pilot practice of offender-victim dialogue<sup>10</sup>), actions by activists against zero-tolerance policies in school discipline, and developing community autonomy during those periods without hate crimes.

### TALKING POINTS

- Hate crimes legislation like the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act does not protect queer communities. It condemns offenders to a broken prison system instead of bringing a community together to address the root cause of this violence.
- Efforts to promote community healing through restorative justice stand a better chance of interrupting the cycle of violence and incarceration that characterizes prejudiced hate crimes.

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# SMARTER GUN CONTROL

T. GARRISON LOVELY, CORNELL UNIVERSITY

*In order to prevent the accidental gun violence that stems from a lack of regulation and education on gun safety, a comprehensive licensing process should be required for legal purchase and use of a firearm.*

Born out of the Second Amendment, civilian gun ownership is integral to the history and identity of the United States. With 88.7 guns per 100 Americans,<sup>1</sup> the U.S. ranks highest in the world for civilian gun ownership.<sup>2</sup> A 2011 Gallup poll estimates that 47 percent of U.S. households own a gun,<sup>3</sup> while a 2012 estimate from the National Rifle Association states that the number of “privately owned firearms in the U.S. [is approaching] 300 million.”<sup>4</sup> In the minds of many Americans, exercising one’s right to “keep and bear arms,” whether for protection or recreation, represents an act of patriotism.

Accidental gun violence caused over 800 deaths and over 32,000 injuries in the U.S. in 2011.<sup>5</sup> Survey data reveal that an estimated 3.3 million children in the U.S. live in households with firearms that are kept loaded and unlocked.<sup>6</sup> In nearly all reported unintentional shooting deaths of children, the gun was stored in or around the home of the victim.<sup>7</sup> Only four states require that gun owners first procure a license.<sup>8</sup> In most states, it is more difficult to obtain a driver’s license than to legally possess a gun.

## KEY FACTS

- Gun owners who received gun training from the National Safety Council were less likely to store the gun unlocked and loaded.
- On average, states with Child Access Prevention (CAP) laws see a 30-40 percent reduction in unintentional shooting injuries and deaths among children and adults.

The Brady Handgun Violence Protection Act of 1993, which relies on the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) to ensure that firearm purchasers are law-abiding citizens,<sup>9</sup> and the now-expired Federal Assault Weapons Ban (AWB) of 1994, which prohibited the manufacture of certain semi-automatic weapons for civilian use,<sup>10</sup> have not conclusively been found to have had any impact on gun violence.<sup>11</sup> Previously manufactured assault weapons were “grandfathered in” by the legislation, and purchases of assault weapons increased significantly before the ban was implemented. In addition, the NICS that the Brady Act relies on “lacks much of the required background information.”<sup>12</sup> In the wake of the Virginia Tech shooting, Congress passed measures to improve the NICS database on those with mental illnesses.<sup>13</sup> Little other progress has been made within the last decade; however, the tragic Sandy Hook shooting has provided the impetus for reform.

## ANALYSIS

A comprehensive and uniform licensing system for civilian gun ownership, requiring a NICS background check and demonstrated proficiency in firearms safety, should be implemented at the federal level, as firearm purchases regulated by state firearm laws often result in interstate inconsistencies. Classifications similar to those required to operate different types of vehicles should also be applied to a licensing process for the legal purchase and use of firearms. In the U.S., approximately 96 percent of all privately owned



firearms fall within the following categories: 34 percent handguns, 36 percent rifles, and 26 percent shotguns.<sup>14</sup> Under the proposed licensing system, each class of firearm would require specific training on proper usage and storage techniques. State and local authorities would enforce the use of locks and safes, especially in households with children.

Child Access Prevention (CAP) laws, which hold gun owners responsible if a child gains access to a firearm that is not stored securely, serve as a model for the proposed licensing system. One study shows that CAP laws correlated with a reduction in unintentional shooting deaths of children by 23 percent within a four-year period.<sup>15</sup> The proposed licensing system, however, goes a step further than existing CAP laws by first requiring a background check in addition to demonstrated proficiency in firearms safety. The proposed licensing system would help reduce the total number of deaths resulting from firearms.

#### TALKING POINTS

- Accidental gun violence led to over 32,000 preventable injuries and over 800 deaths in 2011.
- Proper training and safety measures will lessen the negative effects of civilian gun ownership in the U.S. while increasing the positive ones.

## NEXT STEPS

Congress should implement federal firearms laws that emphasize training and safety measures. In each state, a comprehensive licensing process, similar to that required to obtain a driver's licenses, should be required for the legal purchase and use of firearms. The implementation of the proposed licensing system should coincide with increased access to government-subsidized training programs on proper usage and storage techniques for each class of firearm. Effective training programs already exist, and gun owners have many public and private options. Training programs that demonstrate improvements in firearms safety would be accredited, and successful completion of an approved program would be required for licensing. Furthermore, Congress should establish a broad public education campaign to inform gun owners of the importance of keeping firearms locked and unloaded as a protective measure to reduce accidental gun violence among children and adults.

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# CHANGING ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS:

## IMPROVING DISABILITY AWARENESS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

ELIZABETH SCHROEDER, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA - CHAPEL HILL

*North Carolina's General Assembly should pressure its state universities to require on-line disability awareness modules for new students and faculty to combat ignorance toward people with disabilities.*

People with disabilities are more integrated into society than ever. However, most people still lack the training necessary to understand how to interact with and perceive those with disabilities in a way that gives them the respect and sense of inclusion they deserve.

Significant legislation—the Architectural Barriers Act (1968), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1990), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990)—has decreased discrimination against people with disabilities.<sup>4</sup> Recent legislation has especially attempted to alter social perceptions of people with disabilities; Rosa's Law (2010) replaces “mental retardation” with “intellectual and developmental disabilities” in federal legislation.<sup>5</sup> However, many people's attitudes remain unchanged.

While programs like Best Buddies and Special Olympics have also changed perceptions of people with disabilities, their audience is limited. Students who attend schools without special education programs or are homeschooled often lack the interactions with people with disabilities that lead to more respectful attitudes. As a result, many students begin college unsure of how to treat people with disabilities. University faculty often face similar gaps in training.

### ANALYSIS

Widespread ignorance regarding such a large portion of the population is unacceptable. Many people lack the means to increase their disability awareness, which leads to discomfort with—and contributes to misunderstanding and marginalization of—people with disabilities.<sup>6</sup>

Expanded inclusion of people with disabilities in education and the workforce makes increasing disability awareness in the general public all the more salient. 46 percent of people with some type of disability in America are currently working, and that percentage is expected to continue rising.<sup>7</sup> University students—future educators, political leaders, and employers—therefore have a significant stake in fostering respect for people with disabilities.

### KEY FACTS

- Over 50 million people in America have a disability—16 percent of the population.<sup>1</sup>
- Offending people with disabilities remains common, especially among younger generations: a recent study found that 92 percent of youth have heard others use the word “retarded” in a flippant manner. 86 percent of these instances were by peers.<sup>2</sup>
- Disability training workshops for university faculty, employers, and students have been positively correlated with more positive attitudes toward, and more comfortable interactions with, people with disabilities.<sup>3</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

Universities are increasingly using online modules to educate students. More than 500 universities now use AlcoholEdu, an online alcohol abuse prevention program.<sup>8</sup> Its cost efficiency and ability to reach many students makes it ideal for quickly and inexpensively spreading awareness. This method should be used to educate students on other pressing issues, like disability awareness.

North Carolina's General Assembly should pressure state universities to implement such a module for new students and faculty, which should include sections that:

1. Summarize common intellectual and developmental disabilities—focusing on what people with these disabilities are capable, not incapable of—and recent legislation helping those with disabilities.
2. Encourage use of “people first language,” which emphasizes putting the person before the disability (i.e. “she has a disability” instead of “she’s disabled”).<sup>9</sup>
3. Give strategies for interacting with people with disabilities in various settings (workplace, education, etc.).

## TALKING POINTS

- Ignorance about respectful behavior toward people with disabilities leads to insensitive use of language and potential discrimination.
- Online disability awareness modules could significantly change societal perceptions of people with disabilities.
- Online modules could be produced and distributed inexpensively to state-funded universities in North Carolina.

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# MANDATORY MINIMUM GUIDELINES & NON-VIOLENT OFFENDERS

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*Georgia courts should directly sentence non-violent offenders to resolve any problems of unfair sentences under mandatory minimum guidelines.*

Mandatory minimum sentencing laws, the first national sentencing guidelines in the United States, were enacted with the passage of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 to establish prison terms for drug-related crimes. With the implementation of mandatory minimums, many states adopted “three strike” legislation, which meant individuals convicted of three or more serious offenses would automatically be sentenced to 25 years to life in prison. Georgia implemented such a law in 1995.<sup>1</sup> In 2010, approximately 60,000 inmates were housed in Georgia prisons, with each inmate costing an average of \$50,000. A national commission established in 2010 advocated reexamining mandatory minimums to reduce the prison population.<sup>2</sup> In 2012, Georgia started easing the fiscal burden of mandatory minimums by passing HB 1176, a bill creating new categories of offenses so that nonviolent offenders could be placed in rehabilitation programs instead of prison.<sup>3</sup>

## ANALYSIS

Mandatory minimum guidelines can result in excessive punishment for minor crimes, as in the case of Santos Reyes, a citizen of California who was charged with two counts of non-violent burglary and applying for a driver’s license under a false name.<sup>4</sup> Under the Three Strikes Law in California, Mr. Reyes was sentenced to 26 years in jail. This is excessive considering the minor crimes for which Mr. Reyes was convicted. In 2010, the total prison population in Georgia rose by 843, bringing the total to 53,562.<sup>5</sup> With passage of HB 1176, Georgia legislators accepted the fact that a new approach is needed to lower the state’s prison population and costs. To truly address the fiscal and judicial flaws of these sentencing guidelines, the court system needs to be able to address each case individually, with mandatory minimum guidelines revised to allow for the courts to assign fair sentencing in every case.

### KEY FACTS

- Georgia allocates 1 out of every 17 dollars of state taxes to the Department of Corrections, at a cost of approximately \$1.5 billion annually.
- As the national average of prisoners dropped for the first time in 40 years, Georgia continued to add prisoners, bringing the total number of inmates to over 53,000 - many of whom are imprisoned for nonviolent offenses.

## NEXT STEPS

The first step to realizing this goal should be the continued implementation of HB 1176, as it is the first step to building a justice system that gives fair sentences to every case. The second step is the establishment of a state commission to examine remaining mandatory minimum sentencing guidelines not addressed by HB 1176. The third step taken should be the creation of legislation allowing the state of Georgia to revise minimum sentencing for offenders based on the recommendations of the state commission. Ideally, this would include exemptions under state law from federal sentencing guidelines, allowing judges

to make a fair and appropriate ruling in each case. The state should also invest the funds freed up by a smaller penitentiary program to expand the number of justices serving in the courts, allowing them to hear more cases. By following these recommendations, the government can reduce spending and effectively address crime while establishing a fair justice system.

#### TALKING POINTS

- Georgia can implement a smart justice system by letting judges decide sentences for individual cases instead of using mandatory guidelines.

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# CLOSING THE GAP: REQUIRING PAY FOR INTERNS

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*To combat the widening opportunity gap between people of different socio-economical levels, New York State should establish a requirement that businesses pay at least minimum wage for all interns.*

In 2010, 50 percent of internships were unpaid.<sup>1</sup> Many professions require applicants to have had relevant experience, which often takes the form of unpaid full-time internships, a luxury that many students cannot afford. This disparity in opportunity prevents many talented young professionals from entering high-skilled, high-pay professions.

Congress passed the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) in 1938, requiring employers to pay a minimum wage to all workers except volunteers who work “solely for humanitarian purposes.” Despite qualifying for minimum wage under this standard, interns are denied compensation, which affects them economically by forcing students to forgo taking a summer job. And although interns qualify as employees under the FLSA, unpaid employees are not protected under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which prohibits workplace discrimination.

Furthermore, as a result of the Supreme Court case *Walling v. Terminal Co.* (1947), the U.S. Department of Labor defined six provisions that must be met in order for companies to legally deny pay to an employee that they are training. Most companies fail on 2-3 of those provisions—intern training is often dissimilar to vocational school curricula, interns often displace employees, and employers often gain immediate advantage from taking on such interns. Thus, companies should be obliged to provide pay.

## KEY FACTS

- 1-2 million people participate in internships annually.<sup>9</sup>
- By refusing to pay interns, American corporations have withheld an estimated \$124 million annually in wages.

Some progress has been made on an ad-hoc basis, as when the architecture industry collectively decided to pay its interns.<sup>2</sup> However, despite the inequity and illegality of unpaid internships, the problem continues as a ubiquitous and accepted part of professional life.

## ANALYSIS

Failing to pay interns also exacerbates the damage caused by high unemployment, as companies replace lower-level positions with internships. For example, interns comprise up to 50 percent of the staff at Disney World.<sup>3</sup> In 2009, the top 10 firms in the U.S. planned to hire 26,000 interns—26,000 positions filled by unpaid workers.<sup>4</sup> By refusing pay for these workers, American corporations are withholding a conservative \$124 million in compensation.<sup>5</sup> Ross Perlin estimates the number to be closer to \$2 billion.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, unpaid internships for academic credit force students to pay for school while working for free, benefitting corporations and universities at the expense of the student. These internships are also illegal under the FLSA, but failures to uphold the standards

discussed in that act mean that unpaid internships are still the norm. Students performing as interns for companies that engage in commerce ought to be paid.

To make any serious effort to address the class gap, it is clear that minimum wage must be awarded to all workers, including interns. While corporations may claim that such policies would force them to drastically reduce their internship programs, research has shown that such complaints are likely unfounded. For example, mandating equal pay for women in 1963, though protested by corporations, did not have an appreciable long-term effect on female participation in the labor force, which increased from 40.8 percent in 1970 to 53.6 percent in 2010, during the height of the recession.<sup>7,8</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

The New York State Assembly should first define what an internship is and then enact a bill that provides legal protections to interns. Companies must be required to pay minimum wage to interns regardless of whether they earn academic credit. A one-year exemption could be provided to new businesses. Compliance could be ensured by requiring annual employer reports documenting pay.

### TALKING POINTS

- Unpaid internships are already illegal under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938.
- Paying interns would help narrow the class gap by allowing working- and lower-middle-class people to enter professional careers.

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# PROHIBITING PARENTAL RIGHTS FOR RAPISTS IN NORTH CAROLINA

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*Prohibit convicted rapists from obtaining custody or visitation rights for children fathered through rape in North Carolina by implementing legislation modeled after bills passed in 17 other states.*

As of 2010, a majority of states provided no protection for rape victims who carry their pregnancies to term.<sup>7</sup> Current laws regarding rape in many states originate from a history of discriminatory denials of a woman's legal right to equality and are perpetuated by societal myths surrounding rape.<sup>7</sup> As a survivor of rape, Shauna Prewitt says, "in a rape case it is the victim, not the defendant, who is on trial."<sup>5</sup> There are 32,011 pregnancies from rape each year<sup>2</sup> and about 10,307 women who decide to carry those pregnancies to term. In 31 states, including North Carolina, the rapists can assert the same custody and visitation rights that other biological parents enjoy.<sup>2</sup>

## ANALYSIS

In North Carolina, victims of rape also become victims of the legal system. Because of stereotypes about these victims, many people assume that no woman desires to raise a child conceived in rape.<sup>5</sup> However, about 185,526 choose to raise a child conceived in rape every year.<sup>2</sup> If the woman chooses to raise her child, she may be forced to share custody privileges with her rapist, ensure the rapist's access to the child, and foster her rapist's relationship to the child.<sup>4</sup> Most states, including North Carolina, have little or no protection in this regard for rape victims who carry their pregnancies to term.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the adoption process is often not a better option, as women are forced to obtain their rapist's consent to place the baby up for adoption.<sup>1</sup> These problematic policies are also costing taxpayers in North Carolina because the state subsidizes the costs of attorneys, therapists, supervisors, probation monitoring, and court hearings that accompany a rapist seeking custody. Bills passed in 17 states – Alaska, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Wisconsin – provide a progressive alternative by requiring that men convicted of rape lose their custody and visitation rights.<sup>6</sup>

## KEY FACTS

- There are an estimated 32,011 pregnancies from rape each year.<sup>2</sup>
- Of the female rape cases in 2010, 25 percent of perpetrators were strangers, 48 percent were a friend or acquaintance, and 17 percent were intimate partners.<sup>3</sup>
- 32.2 percent of rape victims who are impregnated choose to keep the pregnancy and raise their children, 50 percent abort, and 5.9 percent place their children up for adoption.<sup>2</sup>
- In North Carolina and 30 other states, rapists can assert certain custody and visitation rights.<sup>4</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

North Carolina should use the aforementioned bills, specifically those of Idaho, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania, as models to introduce legislation that would achieve similar goals. Idaho Code Section 16-2005 states that the "court may grant termination of pa-



rental rights as to a parent who conceived a child as a result of rape.”<sup>6</sup> According to Oklahoma’s Statute Annotated Title 10 Section 7006-1.1, the court “may terminate parental rights if the child was conceived as a result of rape.”<sup>6</sup> Finally, in Pennsylvania, Consolidated Statute Annotated Section 2511 states “father’s parental rights may be terminated if child conceived as a result of rape or incest.”<sup>6</sup> It is essential for North Carolina’s policymakers, as well as policymakers in the remaining 30 states allowing parental rights to rapists, to understand the magnitude of these unjust policies and pass legislation to protect victims of rape and their children.

### TALKING POINTS

- Under current parental custody and visitation policies, rape victims remain connected to their rapists through their child.<sup>5</sup>
- North Carolina needs legislation that limits the parental rights, specifically those of custody and visitation, allowed to rapists.
- The bills passed in Idaho, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania provide excellent models for a legislative solution in North Carolina.

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# RECOGNIZING YOUTH POLITICAL POWER: A PRESIDENTIAL YOUTH COUNCIL



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When young people from youth councils across the country were first brought together, one of the first things asked was, “we have a model that works great locally; why don’t we have it nationally?” This question comes at a time when young people are shaping politics in our country. Currently, there are 104 million Americans under the age of 24. According to Tufts University, these young people decided the 2012 election,<sup>1</sup> comprising 19 percent<sup>2</sup> of the electorate. Despite this, the Harvard Institute of Politics reports that only 29 percent of young Americans believe they have a say in what the government does.<sup>3</sup> It is time to change this and empower young people with a Presidential Youth Council that would do three things.

## ANALYSIS

First, the Presidential Youth Council would serve to collect and share the views of the 104 million Americans under the age of 24.<sup>4</sup> Council members would conduct listening sessions and analyze polls done by Pew, CIRCLE, and the Harvard Public Opinion Project to produce one comprehensive report outlining the issues that matter to young people. This would assist policymakers by giving them an unbiased perspective on the issues their young constituents care about.

### KEY FACTS

- Only 29 percent of young Americans ages 18-29 believe they have a say in what the government does.
- There are over 104 million Americans under the age of 24.
- In 2012, young people comprised 19 percent of the electorate. According to Tufts University, they decided the election.

Second, the Presidential Youth Council would serve as a sounding board for policymakers in the design and implementation of youth policies. This would make the federal government more efficient and effective because young people know what works for them and what doesn’t and what they need and don’t need.

Finally, the Presidential Youth Council would take on a major issue every year that affects the long-term future of the country and produce a set of bipartisan recommendations on how to solve it. This would provide policymakers with guidance on how future generations would solve problems and give young people an in-depth understanding of those problems. The process encourages both young people and adults to seek compromise.

## NEXT STEPS

The council would be comprised of 24 members between 16 and 24, half appointed by Democrats and half by Republicans. Council members would be selected from a pool of young people nominated by the over 400 youth councils in cities and states across the country.

Recognizing that our nation is facing a tough fiscal climate, the Presidential Youth Council would be privately funded. The estimated cost for the council is between \$500,000

and \$1 million dollars. The Campaign for a Presidential Youth Council has already received a \$50,000 grant from the Knight Foundation and has approached a number of other funders.

Funding for the council itself is the most important next step. It will be essential in convincing the administration this is an idea worth pursuing. In addition, the more members of Congress we have calling for such a council, the more legitimacy the proposal has.

There is already buzz in Washington, D.C. about creating a Presidential Youth Council. Over 100 youth-serving organizations, the White House Council for Community Solutions, and 13 senators and representatives from both parties have endorsed the proposal.<sup>5</sup> Despite all of the adult support, young people remain the campaign's leaders, designing how youth representation in the federal government should look.

It is time for such a council to be created. Young people showed up in force in the 2012 election; now it is time for us to gain a seat at the table.

#### TALKING POINTS

- Young people deserve a seat at the table and the opportunity to help shape the future of our country.
- The Presidential Youth Council would create shared recommendations on issues that affect the long-term future of our country.
- The Presidential Youth Council is designed after a proven local model existing in over 400 cities.

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# MONITORING DISCRIMINATION IN PRIVATE ADOPTION AGENCIES

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*To ensure that government funding is allocated to adoption agencies that prioritize children's well-being, Virginia's state government should collect histories from all of the state's private adoption agencies to identify agencies with patterns of discrimination against qualified parents.*

In 2012, the Virginia State Legislature passed Senate Bill 349, allowing Virginia adoption agencies to refuse to place a child in any home due to moral or religious objections.<sup>1</sup> Supporters of SB 349 believe the bill protects private agencies' right to act based on personal and religious values, but instead it denies children the opportunity to be placed in a home with qualified adoptive parents who identify as LGBTQ simply because agencies may discriminate based on ideological bias. Ultimately, children within the system feel the brunt of this discriminatory policy; in 2011, 38 percent of 1,338,000 domestic U.S. adoptions were private.<sup>2</sup>

## KEY FACTS

- Over 1,300 children in Virginia are in need of homes.<sup>3</sup>
- 38 percent of domestic adoptions in the U.S. are private.<sup>2</sup>

To reduce the number of rejections of qualified prospective parents and increase the number of children placed by private agencies in Virginia, the Virginia State Senate should amend SB 349, also known as the "conscience clause," which permits agencies to refuse placement if applicants' lifestyles are in conflict with the agencies' beliefs. The amendment should require the Department of Health and Human Resources to investigate discriminatory behavior by a private adoption agency prior to awarding them government funding or grant money. This will not force an adoption agency to change its behavior, but instead ensure that the government is not funding discriminatory institutions.

## ANALYSIS

SB 349 negatively impacts adoption-eligible children awaiting loving homes. Minority and disabled children and those older than six years are often hardest for agencies to place. According to a 2011 report by the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, "gays and lesbians are more likely than heterosexuals to adopt older, special-needs and minority children." A survey done of LGBT adoptions at over 300 agencies showed that 10 percent of children placed were older than six, 25 percent were older than three, over 50 percent had special needs, and 60 percent of LGBT parents adopted across races.<sup>5</sup> Denying LGBT applicants reduces the likelihood that all Virginia children, but particularly those often difficult to place, will find good homes.

The Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources should create a standardized evaluative form for agencies to complete following each acceptance or rejection of potential adoptive parents. The form should collect demographic data on applicants including race, ethnic background, religion, age, gender, and sexual orientation. Any patterns of preference or prejudice that arise in the demographic data collected would then be

taken into consideration by the Department of Health and Human Resources when deciding where to allocate government funds and grant money.

The financial benefits to Virginia would offset the costs of this program. According to the Williams Institute, federal and state governments spend \$43,844 per year for every child who remains in the system. It is estimated that allowing all qualified parents to adopt would save hundreds of thousands of dollars.<sup>6</sup>

This amendment would not constrict the religious freedom of private agencies. Private adoption agencies reserve the right to place children in accordance with their beliefs, but the non-religiously-affiliated state government should not use taxpayer money to support these agencies over those that approve parent applicants based solely on legitimate qualifications.

#### TALKING POINTS

- Virginia Senate Bill 349 allows private adoption agencies to use religious convictions to discriminate against LGBT parents and deny homes to children in need.
- Government funding should be allocated to agencies most concerned with children's welfare, and LGBT prospective parents have proven to adopt many children who are often harder to place.
- SB 349 should be amended to allow the state government to collect detailed demographics of each accepted and denied candidate in order to monitor discrimination occurring in private adoption agencies. If discrimination is occurring, that adoption agency should not be eligible for state funding.

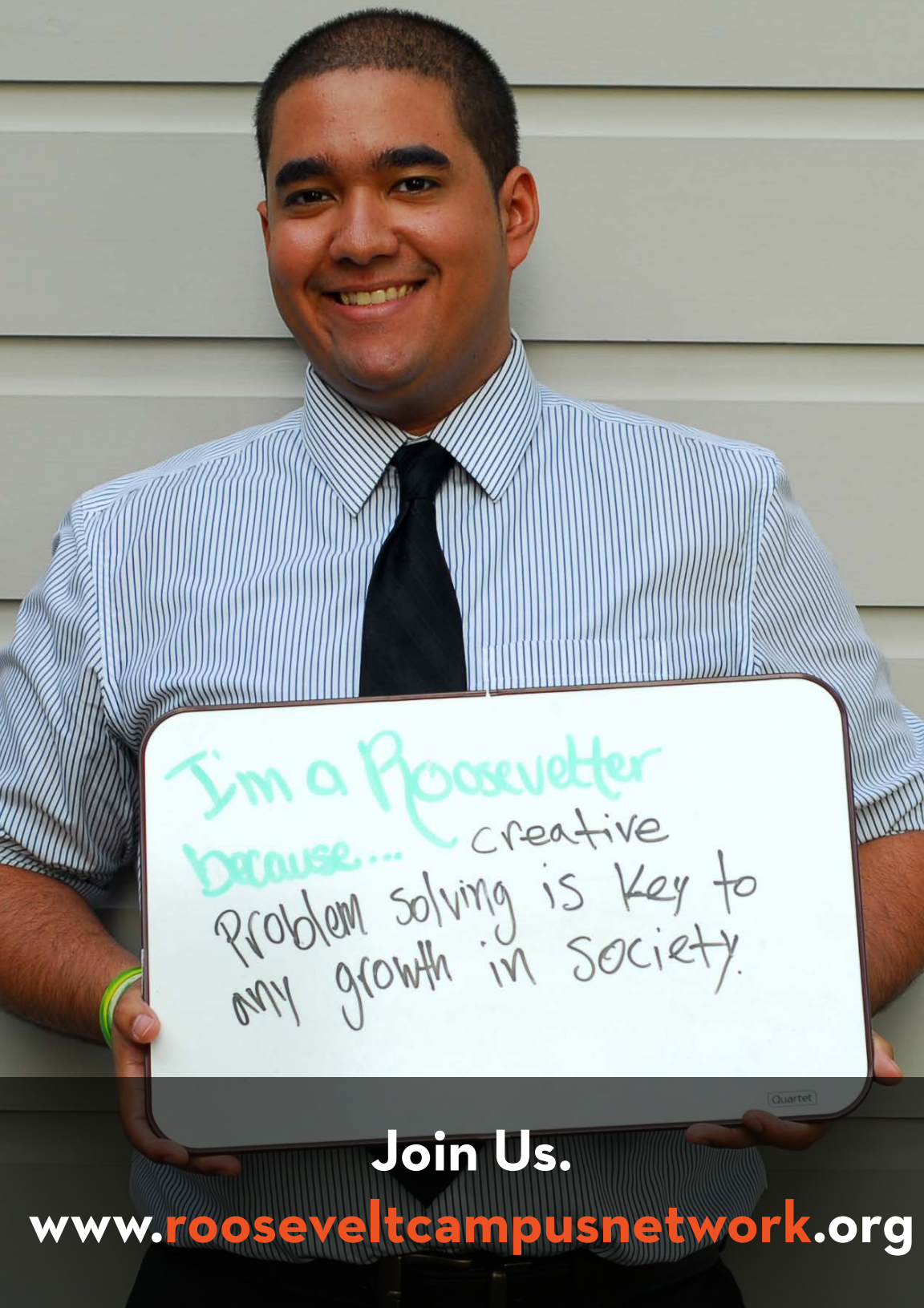
#### NEXT STEPS

The Virginia State Senate should amend SB 349 to allow the government to monitor private adoptions agencies' reasoning for approving and denying potential parents. The agencies' histories would be collected through a government-issued form, to be created immediately, tracking the demographics of prospective parents. The data collected would inform the Department of Health and Human Resources of which agencies are making logical, unprejudiced decisions, allowing the government to take this into account when deciding which agencies will receive grant money and funding.

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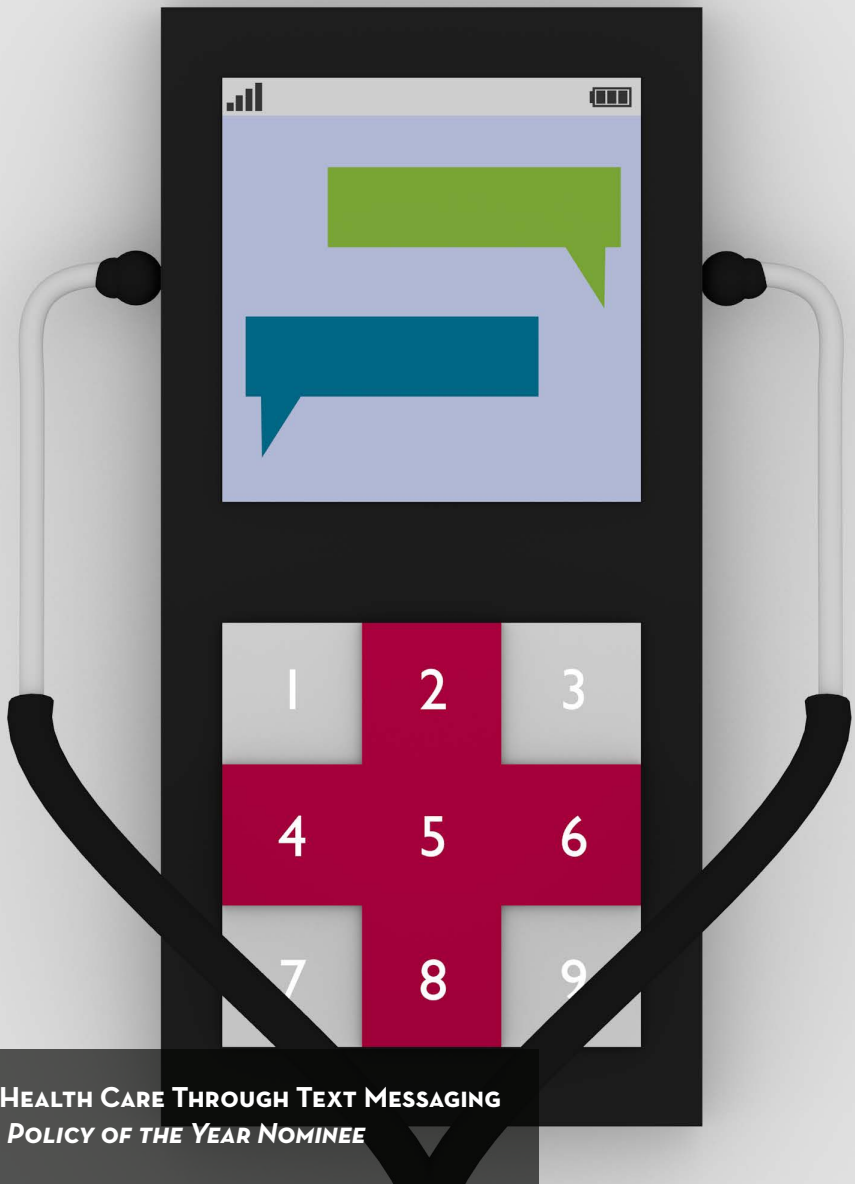
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# 10<sup>IDEAS</sup> *for* HEALTH CARE

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# LETTER FROM NEW YORK CITY

**The Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network** was established in 2004 in response to the deep and pervasive sense that young people were overlooked in the policymaking process – that we could put boots on the ground and donate what little money we had to support leaders that promoted our progressive values, but our ideas, opinions, and priorities were not represented in our public discourse or electoral system. It was this realization and subsequent rejection of the status quo that led to the founding of what is now the nation's largest student policy organization.

That original purpose has endured as the Campus Network has grown to over 100 chapters. Yet at a recent gathering, one of our top leaders noted that the challenges we face in the wake of the 2012 election are similar to the ones that first brought us together. We are increasingly powerful actors in our public debates, but despite the bold ideas and ambitious agendas we've envisioned, designed, supported, and fought for, we are still beholden to a political process more focused on scoring partisan points than moving our country forward.

What emerged from that moment of collective reflection was the recognition of our unrealized potential as a movement. While our members' student-generated ideas and solutions-oriented action have redefined youth participation in the political process, it will take constant renewal and commitment to fresh ideas, rigorous engagement, and long-term action to achieve what we know is possible.

The 2013 10 Ideas series represents that ongoing effort to build the infrastructure, communities, and platforms that will allow us to realize the vision that was first laid out in dorm rooms across the country eight years ago. This year, our premier journals represent unique ideas from 83 authors at 30 different schools. As they go to press, our members are already translating those ideas into action by initiating petitions, collaborating with local partners and stakeholders, and lobbying on Capitol Hill.

Last year, we proudly presented the 10 Ideas series as a powerful reminder that this generation is not only willing to build a better future, but has already begun. This year, we put these solutions forward to demonstrate that members of this generation are in it for the long haul as part of an initiative that is always growing, always evolving, and always looking toward the future in the pursuit of progress.

Taylor Jo Isenberg  
National Director  
Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network



# WELCOME

**We are pleased to share** the fifth edition of the Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network's flagship 10 Ideas series. These journals, encompassing the best student ideas from our six policy centers, are filled with game-changing public policy suggestions that we can and must implement now.

We are in desperate need of these ideas. Rising healthcare costs, increasing inequality, global climate change, and a government that often seems unable or unwilling to address the things that matter most are challenges that require the very best and the very brightest.

At the same time, we are told that Millennials are checked out, have lost interest, and are waiting for someone else to solve our problems. These journals are an answer to that narrative, making the clear case that we are engaged and active citizens, putting forward ideas to change the problems we see in the world around us. We believe in the power of people working together to solve problems.

Each year, the 10 Ideas journals provide a vision for change that addresses the needs of our neighborhoods, our cities, and our country. Working with community members, local nonprofits, professors, and lawmakers, these student authors have identified the policies that can make the most difference. Yet this journal represents just the tip of the iceberg, with many hours of organizing, researching, fundraising, and developing public campaigns hidden below the surface.

This year's Healthcare journal focuses on how we receive and process healthcare information. Authors identify healthcare literacy as a key way to improve outcomes and reduce costs in a broken system of care: Improving the communication skills of doctors or the reach of medical information through text messaging fit into a larger narrative of giving patients more information. There was also an emphasis on preventative care, tackling issues like nutrition and obesity before they can cause large drains on the healthcare system. Meanwhile, fighting for youth representation in national healthcare legislation can help bring many of the common sense ideas in this journal to fruition.

Taken on its own, each idea is a simple solution. These journals and the 10 Ideas series taken together are a library of ideas that can help us build toward a more equal, accessible, and community-minded world.

Join us in seeing these ideas realized.

Alan Smith  
Program and Policy Director  
Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network

Lydia Bowers  
Deputy Program and Policy Director  
Roosevelt Institute | Campus Network

# FIRST AID TRAINING ON CONNECTICUT ROADWAYS

TOBY AMODEO, AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

*Adding a first aid training requirement to new driver's licenses and license renewals in Connecticut would help provide early treatment in both traffic- and non-traffic related injuries.*

Over 26,000 driving-related injuries occur annually in Connecticut.<sup>1</sup> Treatment is crucial in the minutes after an injury occurs, even if only basic first aid is applied. Accidents and injuries can occur at any time, and bystanders often act as first responders. Yet the number of people trained in even basic first aid in Connecticut is not known. Connecticut drivers should be trained to provide immediate first aid when accidents occur. A similar requirement is employed in other countries, including Germany.<sup>2</sup> Courses that include first aid training for potential traffic related injuries and other common accidents must be approved by the government. By providing Connecticut drivers with first aid skills, bystanders at the scene of an accident can begin assisting anyone injured, helping to stabilize the situation until professional help arrives.

## KEY FACTS

- In 2008, Connecticut citizens experienced 26,066 driving-related injuries.<sup>1</sup>
- The Red Cross estimates that for help to be within reach at all times, 30 percent of the population must be trained in first aid.<sup>3</sup>

## ANALYSIS

First aid training is expensive, with the cost of a CPR course alone ranging from \$70 to \$110 if led by a Red Cross instructor<sup>4</sup> and higher with the additional first aid component. Yet it is estimated that road accidents cost countries between 1 and 3 percent of their GNP,<sup>4</sup> about \$500 billion in the United States. Training citizens in first aid can substantially reduce the cost of medical treatment by reducing panic and providing stabilizing, immediate treatment at the scene of an accident. Since 50 percent of all traffic deaths occur within minutes of the crash,<sup>5</sup> it is vital that immediate assistance be present.

State legislators can take advantage of a broad base of support for this legislation. Parents of new drivers (including Mothers Against Drunk Driving), healthcare professionals, car insurers, and current drivers could be important sources of support for this initiative, as each would like to see fewer accidents. More generally, every commuter, parent, and Connecticut resident could gain enormous benefits from this program due to the added security it will provide in everyday life. If an emergency occurs, someone will be ready.

## NEXT STEPS

All new drivers, regardless of their income, should be provided with free training by the Connecticut state government. To provide instruction for new drivers, the DMV should partner with the Connecticut chapter of the Red Cross to train current DMV employees as Red Cross instructors for the six locations offering road tests. By providing training through existing DMV employees instead of hiring additional instructors, Connecticut could lower the costs of implementing this policy. Once the instructors are trained, they will still be official DMV employees. License renewals should also require proof of completion of an approved first aid course, either with a DMV instructor or another Red

Cross instructor. Expenses incurred by the driver should be counted as tax-deductible up to the value of the course offered at the DMV. All drivers trained in first aid would be exempt from prosecution if the first aid they provide does not save the life of a victim or causes injury, following the example of the Good Samaritan laws.

The Connecticut legislature must show bipartisan support for this program in order to ease public discomfort. Connecticut has already proven that it is willing to change its driving laws to ensure its roads are safe, such as its establishment of a curfew for drivers under 18. Connecticut can continue this precedent of creating safer roadways by adopting the first aid program. New instructors should be in place and training new drivers by mid-2015. The first aid requirement for license renewal should be implemented for all renewals after January 1, 2017. This window provides enough time for the Connecticut state government to have new instructors trained and to evaluate current courses that license renewal candidates may employ. To measure the effect of this program, it will be necessary to administer a first aid practical examination at the end of each license renewal to ensure that information is being retained by drivers.

#### TALKING POINTS

- Driving-related injuries occur frequently in Connecticut, yet injured parties often must wait long times for professional treatment.<sup>6</sup>
- Training Connecticut drivers in first aid will create safer roadways, helping improve treatment for traffic-related injuries.

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# REDUCING FRAUD WITH INCENTIVES FOR MORE ACCURATE MEDICARE BILLING

POORVI CHHABRA, UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

*The federal government should incentivize hospitals to reduce false Medicare Evaluation and Management coding in order to reduce fraudulent Medicare reimbursements.*

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) published a report in May 2012 concluding Medicare Evaluation and Management (E&M) billing had increased significantly between 2001-2010. E&M codes reimburse physicians for their intellectual efforts when taking a patient's history and physical examination and making a diagnosis and treatment plan. All physicians must use Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) codes to receive Medicare reimbursements. CPT billing guidelines were designed for individual physicians in private practice. In 2000, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) mandated that hospitals and emergency departments must also use CPT codes but did not create guidelines designed specifically for hospital use.<sup>1</sup> Hospitals constantly struggle to cover their operating costs, and since E&M coding is dependent upon the individual interpretation of services rendered, E&M coding is especially vulnerable to fraud.<sup>3</sup> Hospitals and emergency departments have been criticized for fraudulent E&M billing, but without billing guidelines, it's difficult for the CMS to conduct audits. The American Hospital Association (AHA) has requested hospital-specific guidelines; various guidelines have been proposed but never backed by the federal government.<sup>1</sup>

## KEY FACTS

- Of the \$2.19 trillion spent on personal health care in the United States in 2010, Medicare accounted for 23 percent, or \$525 billion.<sup>2</sup>
- Health care fraud costs taxpayers an estimated \$60 billion per year.<sup>5</sup>
- "Between 2001 and 2010, Medicare payments for E/M services increased by 48 percent, from \$22.7 billion to \$33.5 billion."<sup>3</sup>
- Thousands of medical professionals have billed Medicare at progressively higher rates over a decade's time, costing taxpayers at least \$11 billion in inflated charges.<sup>1</sup>

## ANALYSIS

Instead of creating new guidelines for hospital E&M billing, the federal government should look to the root cause of hospitals' struggles to cover operating costs. All physicians and hospitals that take Medicare patients are paid a capitation rate – a base payment for accepting Medicare patients. The report published by the OIG identified 1,669 physicians who consistently billed higher-level E&M codes. The federal government should offer an increase in capitation rates to these 1,669 providers in exchange for a reduction in E&M billing over the course of two years. Across the U.S., the 2010 average Medicare Part B capitation rate was \$336 per "aged" enrollee. If the federal government increased this average capitation rate for the 1,669 physicians by 10 percent, it would cost \$2,558,035 for the 76,132 beneficiaries served by these physicians. If these physicians lowered their average Medicare payment per E&M service from \$131.24 to \$88.25 (the average for all other physicians),<sup>3</sup> Medicare would pay \$73,128,009 rather than \$108,751,501, saving \$35,623,492. If these 1,669 physicians kept this lowered trend for two years, and Medicare then increased their capitation rates by 10 percent, the

federal government will have saved \$33,065,457 every year. If this incentive works, then the federal government should consider raising capitation rates to all their providers as an incentive for providers to bill E&M more accurately.

When the hospitals defraud the federal government, hospitals are defrauding taxpayers. Hospitals are also stakeholders, as they are faced with slim to none profit margins. Many defrauding hospitals are simply trying to cover their losses when they resort to upcoding.<sup>1</sup> Offering increases in capitation rates to motivate them to make their E&M coding more accurate would reduce fraudulent Medicare spending. Finally, the 47 million people who are insured by Medicare are stakeholders in this policy.<sup>2</sup> Their insurance premiums rise as Medicare reimbursements to hospitals rise.<sup>4</sup> Reduce reimbursements, reduce premiums.

#### TALKING POINTS

- Medicare makes up 23 percent of the total dollars spent on health care in the United States.
- Medicare paid over \$108 million for E&M services performed by physicians who consistently billed the two highest level E&M codes in 2010. These 1,669 physicians represented less than 1 percent of all physicians who performed E&M services in 2010.<sup>3</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

Since the OIG has a list of potentially fraudulent providers, it can approach these providers with this proposal. The providers can then begin reducing their E&M billing to more accurately reflect the services rendered. The OIG will monitor these providers' E&M billing using already established software. If after a two-year fiscal period these providers have reduced their E&M billing, the federal government should offer them increased capitation rates. The federal government should then use this as evidence for a broader proposal that encompasses all Medicare providers.

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# STRICTER SAFETY REGULATIONS NEEDED IN THE PHARMACEUTICAL COMPOUNDING INDUSTRY

LAYLA HOOD, CORNELL UNIVERSITY

*To increase patient safety, the FDA should implement stricter and more coherent regulations on the production and distribution of compounded pharmaceutical medications.*

The meningitis outbreak that began in mid September has resulted in the deaths of 45 people and the infection of hundreds more. Thousands are still waiting to see if they, too, will be affected.<sup>1</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that the cause of this infection was a tainted drug synthesized by a New England area compounding pharmacy.<sup>1</sup> Pharmaceutical compounding is the practice of making individualized medications for unique patients. Children often require medicine in liquid or flavored forms, requiring them to be compounded. Hospice patients use compounded pharmaceuticals tailored to specific dosages for their prescribed treatments. Other pa-

tients have allergies and other special needs that prevent them from taking traditional medications. The recent outbreak and resulting deaths have reignited concerns about government regulations for pharmaceutical compound production and distribution.

## KEY FACTS

- Compounded drugs are not FDA-approved.<sup>8</sup>
- Studies have found that about one third of compounding pharmacists fail to produce satisfactory medications.<sup>5</sup>
- About 40 million prescriptions for compounded medications are written each year in order to provide specialized medications to pediatric patients, dialysis patients, and patients with allergies and other special needs.<sup>1</sup>

## ANALYSIS

The Pharmacy Compounding Accreditation Board (PCAB) reports that more than 40 million prescriptions need to be compounded each year.<sup>2</sup> Both state and federal mandates exist to regulate the safety of the drugs, but these regulations are often unclear, according to many health care policy professionals.<sup>3</sup> For example, the line between compounding individual drugs and small-scale manufacturing has never been drawn, allowing manufacturers to masquerade as compounders and producing drugs with minimal oversight from state governments or the FDA.<sup>4</sup> State pharmaceutical boards have found that compounding pharmacists fail to produce satisfactory medicines a third of the time and frequently are under or over concentrate dosages due to errors in calculations and mistakes during the manufacturing process.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, many compounding companies, such as the New England pharmacy responsible for the meningitis outbreak, have never applied for accreditation.<sup>4</sup> The Compliance Policy Guide of May 2002 states that compounding may occur in only small amounts and after receiving valid prescriptions.<sup>6</sup> It also states that compounded medications must be synthesized using components from a list of FDA-approved substances and using commercial scale manufacturing or testing equipment.<sup>6</sup> These compounding regulations clarify somewhat the difference between compounding and manufacturing but place little emphasis on regulation. Several states have pharmaceutical boards dedicated to adherence, but even these efforts are not

enough.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, because these drugs are not mass-produced, they do not need to be approved by the FDA.<sup>8</sup> Compounding represents a blind spot in drug safety.

Compounded pharmaceuticals are often cheaper to produce than mass-produced drugs due to relaxed oversight from state pharmaceutical boards and the FDA. The compound form of progesterone is 1.67 percent of the price of the FDA-approved version of progesterone.<sup>5</sup> It was also reported in testimony during a hearing in the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions in October 2003 that compounded drugs could be manufactured at just 2.5 percent of the price of FDA-approved drugs.<sup>7</sup> However, the same testimony acknowledged that compound pharmacists often use cheaper and potentially unsafe products to make higher profits.<sup>7</sup>

#### TALKING POINTS

- Enforcing stricter regulations would make pharmaceutical compounding safer for patients.
- Compounded medications that do not possess FDA-approved labeling should warn patients of the risks.

## NEXT STEPS

It is necessary for the FDA to research and enact stricter regulations to ensure that compounded products being released to the public are just as safe as FDA-approved medications. Additionally, compounding pharmacies should be required to become accredited by the PCAB in order to ensure compliance with government mandates. Until these stricter regulations go into effect, the FDA should mandate proper labeling to warn patients of the increased risks of compounded medications. Adopting these changes will increase the safety of compounding pharmaceuticals for many patients.

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# UTILIZING SNAP TO REDUCE THE PREVALENCE OF OBESITY

ALLISON HUDGENS, HENDRIX COLLEGE

*To reduce the prevalence of obesity within high-risk populations, Congress should create an opt-in program within the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that increases participants' funding while requiring that their SNAP dollars be budgeted according to USDA dietary guidelines.*

According to the Centers for Disease Control, obesity costs the U.S. over \$147 billion in medical expenses each year and affects more than one-third of adults.<sup>1</sup> Nearly 70 percent of U.S. adults are overweight or obese.<sup>2</sup> While no group is “immune” to obesity, some are more at risk than others. There is a strong negative correlation between income and the likelihood of obesity.<sup>3</sup> Since low-income groups are most likely to participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the purpose of which is to help end hunger and to improve nutrition and health, SNAP is a good platform from which to address the obesity epidemic. But SNAP may not be improving nutrition or health.<sup>4</sup> Individuals participating in SNAP are often consuming more calories than those with similar incomes who do not participate in SNAP, so they are often more likely to be obese.<sup>5</sup> This may be because SNAP's monthly payout schedule effectively encourages binge eating followed by energy restriction, known as the “food stamp cycle.”<sup>6</sup> Foods commonly purchased in the food stamp cycle are high in sugar and fat. SNAP participants also consume significantly more soda than non-participants; an estimated \$4 billion in SNAP benefits are spent on soda each year.<sup>7</sup> SNAP's lack of restrictions makes purchasing unhealthy foods and beverages possible. However, SNAP certainly has the potential to improve health and nutrition, as it makes food more accessible.

## ANALYSIS

A study conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health found that the prevalence of obesity was 30 percent higher in SNAP participants than in non-participants, even after controlling for socio-demographic factors.<sup>8</sup> According to a USDA commissioned report, increasing the SNAP benefits of participants did not result in an increase in their consumption of healthy foods.<sup>9</sup> However, financial incentives can be used to encourage a healthy, well-balanced diet by specifically designating and increasing SNAP dollars for each food group. Likewise, this policy proportionally increases people's SNAP dollars if they choose to participate.

### KEY FACTS

- 36 percent of U.S. adults are obese.<sup>15</sup>
- Obesity costs the U.S. over \$147 billion per year.<sup>16</sup>
- Low-income groups are at high risk for obesity.<sup>17</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

The USDA ought to periodically appraise the costs associated with following MyPlate guidelines and fund the program accordingly. An additional premium could also be offered to further incentivize participation. Existing technologies can be harnessed to make this policy work. Most food purchases made by SNAP participants involve optical scanning devices that scan barcodes on food items that contain information about



the type of food.<sup>10</sup> The Electronic Benefits Transfer system provides participants with a card containing their SNAP dollars that are automatically deducted through purchases and is refilled every month. To implement this policy, the USDA would allocate extra funding to the cards of participants in the new program. As participants buy food products with a barcode indicating a certain food group (for example vegetables) the money spent will be deducted from the card's vegetable budget. The infrastructure for this policy would be similar to that of WIC, run by the USDA, which classifies specific foods as eligible for participants to purchase. The USDA should implement this policy as a pilot program to evaluate its effectiveness. An existing USDA partnership with New York City has created a program to double the value of food stamps when spent in farmer's markets. The proposed policy capitalizes on New York City's openness to SNAP reform and takes the partnership one step further by allowing an increased healthy food budget that can be spent anywhere. The USDA should also consider piloting a program in the South, where both poverty and obesity rates are among the highest in the nation.<sup>11,12</sup>

#### TALKING POINTS

- Simply increasing SNAP funding does not increase the likelihood of purchasing healthy food.
- SNAP has virtually no restrictions on what food can be purchased.
- Stricter requirements for food purchases coupled with increased SNAP dollars may incentivize healthy eating.

Regulating the food purchased with SNAP dollars while offering extra money to buy healthy groceries will increase the quality of food eaten by low-income Americans, a group prone to obesity.<sup>13</sup> This will relieve the burden on public medical programs such as Medicaid, which uses 11 percent of its expenditures on obesity-related medical conditions.<sup>15</sup>

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# REDUCING UNINTENDED TEEN PREGNANCIES:

## REFORMING TEXAS STATE CODE

MADELEINE MCNALLY, MOUNT HOLYOKE

*The Texas Board of Education can reduce unintended teen pregnancies by permitting School-Based Health Centers and nurses to provide access to basic contraception in schools.*

School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) are established health clinics that provide basic care, catering mainly to students. Schools without an SBHC have a designated school nurse. Both SBHCs and school nurses are means by which other states dispense contraception. Yet both are strictly prohibited from doing so according to the Texas Education Code, which states, “A school district may not distribute condoms in connection with instruction relating to human sexuality.”<sup>1</sup> Yet sexually active teenagers without access to contraception are 85 percent more likely to become pregnant within one year.<sup>2</sup> Unintended teen pregnancy is especially prevalent in Texas, where the teen pregnancy rate ranks third highest in the nation.<sup>3</sup> In addition, Texas leads the nation in repeat births among adolescents ages 15 to 19.<sup>4</sup> The high number of unintended teenage pregnancies has a massive societal and financial impact: only 33 percent of teen mothers will graduate high school and 1.5 percent will continue on to pursue a college level degree by the age of 30.<sup>5</sup> High school dropouts and non-college graduates experience significantly worse financial outcomes compared to their peers with degrees. Increasing the likelihood that mothers will be forced to raise their children in low-income households perpetuates a cycle of disenfranchisement and poverty.

### KEY FACTS

- Texas ranks third highest in the nation for unintended teen pregnancies, at 63.4 pregnancies per 1000 teens ages 15 to 19.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2008, publicly funded family planning services helped avoid 98,700 unintended pregnancies in Texas.
- An unintended pregnancy costs \$9,000 on average from taxpayer funds.<sup>11</sup>

By authorizing SBHCs and school nurses to dispense basic contraceptive devices, the Texas Board of Education can help reverse the massive social and economic repercussions resulting from teen pregnancies. In 1986, the Oregon school district of Multnomah County allowed SBHCs and school nurses to dispense contraception to great success. Since implementation of this policy, 96.2 percent of sexually active females who reported to school health facilities for contraception did not get pregnant. Also, teens of both sexes started using contraceptive methods earlier and more frequently.<sup>6</sup> Baltimore, MD had similar outcomes of increased and prolonged birth control use when its school district began dispensing contraception in its SBHCs.<sup>7</sup> While dissemination of contraception often raises concerns about levels of sexual activity, a study done in Los Angeles County High School revealed that students with access to contraception showed no increased rate of sexual activity compared to those without.<sup>8</sup>

### ANALYSIS

SBHCs are funded by taxpayer dollars and third-party insurance groups. Thus services

such as birth control are free for students. Given that adolescent pregnancies cost the state of Texas \$1 billion in taxpayer dollars each year, the cost of stocking SBHCs with contraception would be extremely small in comparison. In 2008, publicly funded family planning services helped to avoid 98,700 unintended pregnancies in Texas, which would have potentially resulted in 43,900 births, 41,200 abortions, and 13,600 complications.<sup>9,10</sup> With an unintended pregnancy costing taxpayers \$9,000 on average, births in the year 2008 alone would have cost approximately \$395,100,100.<sup>11</sup> This does not even take into consideration the annual inflation of yearly expenses to raise these children. Since many teenage mothers are forced to drop out of high school, their potential earnings are vastly decreased. An average high school dropout can be expected to make \$973,000 in a lifetime, in comparison to those with a bachelor's degrees who will earn \$2,268,000.<sup>12</sup> Because their potential educational achievements are curbed by motherhood, adolescent mothers have little opportunity for advancement, forcing many into difficult environments for raising children. By extending family planning services to Texas's SBHCs, taxpayers will save millions of dollars while increasing the chances of success for thousands of young women.

#### TALKING POINTS

- Texas Education Code prohibits the disbursement of contraceptive services in public school district School-Based Health Centers.
- Unintended teen pregnancies in the state of Texas cost approximately \$1 billion in taxpayer dollars annually.<sup>11</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

Policymakers in Texas should revise the education code to permit the dissemination of basic contraceptive services in school district health facilities. In doing this, the Texas Board of Education will drastically decrease the numerous costs of unintended teen pregnancies while fostering safer habits among sexually active teens.

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# IMPROVING HEALTHCARE THROUGH TEXT MESSAGING

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Patient compliance poses a major challenge for health practitioners. Despite the wealth of health information available, compliance is low across most demographics, with the lowest rate among low-income and minority groups.<sup>1</sup> One major hurdle is that medical information is not effectively conveyed to patients. A University of Florida study shows that physicians frequently overestimate a patient's ability to translate medical advice into practice.<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, health departments currently disseminate health information broadly, making finding pertinent health information difficult for patients. Targeting health information to patients can solve these problems.<sup>3</sup> High text message usage amongst minorities and low-income families makes it a powerful information delivery system.<sup>4</sup> Health care professionals can reinforce important themes by sending patients specific information during critical periods through targeted text messages. Using an automated texting platform in conjunction with healthcare expert contact can expand preventative care to low-income individuals.

## KEY FACTS

- 83 percent of American adults own cell phones and 73 percent of them send and receive text messages.<sup>4</sup>
- According to the Cellular Telephone Industries Association (CTIA), monthly text messaging has increased from 18.7 billion in 2006 to 193.1 billion texts in 2011.<sup>8</sup>
- According to the "The Emerging mHealth: paths for growth" study, on average, "about half of patients say that mHealth will improve healthcare."<sup>3</sup>

## ANALYSIS

A University of Southern California study found that educational literature on diabetes management delivered through a texting-based program promoted healthy behavior changes among low-income diabetes patients.<sup>5</sup> While not intended to replace interactions with healthcare professionals, this mobile initiative would work to increase patient compliance.

The deployment of such an initiative is also cost effective. Partnering with hospitals ameliorates costs by utilizing existing infrastructure and personnel. Furthermore, since most at-risk patients own cell phones with texting, there is no additional cost to them. Through the use of online customizable platforms such as Twilio, each patient can be served for less than \$2 a month.<sup>6</sup> Several hospitals using patient education programs have reduced healthcare costs by up to 20 percent.<sup>7</sup> Through patient education, mHealth initiatives will increase patient compliance and reduce healthcare costs.

This policy would provide local residents with tailored information for maintaining healthy lifestyles. Additionally, local hospitals would provide necessary infrastructure and personnel while government social programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women and Children (WIC) and Medicaid would guide low-income residents to these mHealth programs. Local and state health departments would also be

valuable resources in funding and implementing the mHealth programs.

## NEXT STEPS

Strong partnerships must be made between local hospitals and the personnel implementing the mHealth programs in order to identify local health disparities. Additionally, support from local and state health departments must be garnered in order to have the proper resources to implement mHealth initiatives. The messages could be constructed using available public health literature along with expert opinions in the field. Local and national organizations, such as WIC, can be valuable resources, as they craft material specifically for public consumption. To further test the effectiveness of the material, focus group interviews using local individuals may be conducted. A mobile texting platform, such as Twilio, may be programmed to automate the information delivery system.<sup>7</sup> Such platforms allow for the personalization of texts based on subscriber characteristics and data collection. Thus, healthcare providers will be able to both deliver targeted information and gauge compliance.

### TALKING POINTS

- Patients' mismanagement of chronic illnesses like diabetes and hypertension puts a huge financial burden on the health care system.
- Current public health interventions that rely on mass advertising do not provide enough relevant personalized information.
- The government provides too much health information for most people to analyze and understand.
- mHealth interventions are viable strategies for increasing health care information for low-income individuals.
- mHealth interventions have been proven to promote healthy lifestyle changes among low-income populations.

Deployment would first involve testing the efficacy and acceptance of a texting-based support system within the community through pilot studies and clinical trials. Based on these results, the platform may then be deployed to multiple locations and the patient base could be expanded. These programs could also be incorporated into health insurance plans so that insurance companies can cover some of the costs while widening the patient base.

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# PREVENTING STIGMA AND SHORTAGE IN THE NATION'S BLOOD SUPPLY

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*In order to secure the American blood supply during a shortage and prevent sexual stigma, the FDA should revise its current lifetime ban on blood donations from men who have had sexual relations with other men to a one-year deferral period.*

Since 1983, the FDA has enforced a lifetime deferral on blood donations from men who have had sex with men (MSM) at any time since 1977. The stated goal of this policy is to reduce the risk of introducing HIV into the blood supply.<sup>1</sup> Over the lifetime of this policy, however, HIV screening tests have become incredibly reliable.

In June 2012, the American Red Cross declared that blood supplies were at “emergency” lows,<sup>2</sup> suggesting that emergency or elective procedures might have to go unperformed due to the shortage of blood products.

## ANALYSIS

The tremendous advances in testing technology and the dire need for donations to the blood supply call for the FDA to revisit its current policy, which is inconsistent with deferral periods for other high-risk sexual activities. For example, a one year deferral period is maintained for individuals who have had sexual contact with an HIV positive individual.<sup>3</sup>

As early as 2006, the American Red Cross, the American Association of Blood Banks (AABB), and America’s Blood Centers (ABC) called for the policy to be revised, declaring it antiquated and unscientific.<sup>4</sup> They were met with intransigence.

The Williams Institute has conducted research into the implications of revising the ban, finding that the Red Cross’s recommended one-year deferral period would increase the pool by over 1 million eligible donors, and that approximately 90,000 additional units (pints) of blood could be donated annually.<sup>5</sup> This number does not account for the fact that an end to counter-productive forms of protest against this ban – boycotts of blood drives on some college campuses – would potentially also contribute to increased blood donation.

The Red Cross states that the increasingly computerized blood bank system reduces the risk of releasing untested blood to zero, leaving testing failure as the main source of risk to the blood supply.<sup>6</sup> The FDA reports that the failure rate of its HIV testing is about one in 1.5 million, due principally to the so-called window period, which, at about nine days, falls well within the proposed deferral period of one year.<sup>7</sup>

## KEY FACTS

- Were the FDA lifetime ban revised to a one-year deferral period, likely only one unit of tainted blood would enter the blood supply as a result between now and 2030, assuming that screening technology fails to improve, and over 1 million additional units of blood would be collected.
- The risk of failure in current HIV screening methods is estimated at one in 1.5 million.

At current test failure rates, a change to a one-year deferral period would most likely introduce only one tainted unit of blood into the supply between now and 2030.<sup>8</sup>

## NEXT STEPS

The risk of introducing HIV into the blood supply is negligible, especially when compared to the threat posed by “emergency low” levels of blood supplies in the United States.

The continued maintenance of a lifetime deferral policy is inconsistent with current understandings of risk, testing technology, and recommendations from organizations involved in the safety and collection of the American blood supply. This same policy perpetuates stigma and, held to a scientific standard of scrutiny, cannot be justified.

### TALKING POINTS

- The potential risks of revising the ban on MSM blood donation do not substantiate the exclusion of tens of thousands of life-saving donations.
- The current ban has been recognized as unscientific by the Red Cross and other organizations since 2006.

The FDA should revise its current lifetime ban on MSM blood donation to a one-year deferral period. This can be carried forward by regular FDA processes, legislative or executive action, APA (legal) challenge, or administrative constitutionalism, wherein the FDA would internally reach the conclusion that its policy is inconsistent with the constitution.<sup>9</sup>

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# CREATE A YOUTH PIPELINE FOR HHS FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES OVERSEEING HEALTH CARE REFORM

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*The federal government should appoint youth representatives to key federal advisory committees overseeing health care reform.*

In 1972, the passage of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) heralded a new era of citizen representation in American government.<sup>1</sup> The legislation called for the creation of active advisory councils throughout the federal government to provide a forum for citizens – expert and otherwise – to share their perspectives, guidance, and recommendations across the spectrum of public policy. Today, over 1,000 such committees exist in 50 different federal agencies, with almost 300 in healthcare alone.<sup>2</sup>

FACA was written into law with the mandate that these advisory councils must represent broad, diverse, and wide-ranging points of view, spanning different professions, ethnicities, genders, beliefs, and even ages.<sup>3</sup> In practice, however, this representation omits one key demographic in particular: American youth.<sup>4</sup> Though we lack quantitative studies documenting this systematic underrepresentation, a cursory glance of federal advisory council (FAC) rosters shows a distinct lack of young Americans or Millennials. The very group that stands to be principally affected by the implementation of health reform is also the one singularly underrepresented in the decision-making process.

## ANALYSIS

In order to address this lack of representation, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) should ensure that Americans between the ages of 18 and 30 to have their voices heard in the health policymaking process. In particular, focus on three key areas is needed in health reform going forward: prevention, technology, and education. Accordingly, this proposal specifically targets appointing young Americans on the A) National Prevention Council's Advisory Group on Prevention, Health Promotion, and Integrative and Public Health, B) Health IT Policy Committee, and C) Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services' Advisory Panel on Outreach and Education.

Increasing youth representation on federal advisory committees within HHS has numerous legal, political, and ethical benefits. Legally, there is a strong case to be made for the need for youth representation on HHS FACs. By law,<sup>5</sup> in fact, the council composition must encompass a diverse range of membership, leaving the issue of persistent youth underrepresentation open to a judicial line of attack. Politically, the creation of a youth pipeline could result in an overhaul of policy discourse and outcome. The youth representatives bring the voice of their generation into the health policy debate. A recent national survey of

### KEY FACTS

- There are 46 million Millennials in the 18 to 29 voter block, comprising 20 percent of the voting population, and it is projected to reach 44 percent by 2020.
- There are over 300 federal advisory committees on health policy, almost none of which have youth representation.
- Millennials believe in the government's capacity for problem solving in healthcare at rates above the national average.



adults compiled by the Public Religion Research Institute suggests that today's Millennials tend to favor policies that promote equity and egalitarian principles. A full 44 percent have faith in the federal government's capacity for problem solving, such as by providing universal health coverage.<sup>6</sup>

This viewpoint would clearly benefit the policymaking process, as well as politics more broadly. As young adults who are disillusioned about their ability to influence policy see their interests tangibly represented in national health policy implementation, they will likely turn out at the polls in greater numbers. Political groups advocating for youth representation on FACs may enjoy a groundswell of support among this key demographic. The potential for youth voter gains, both in terms of turnout and behind candidates that support the pipeline proposal, is significant; Millennials turn out in the polls at rates that are 10 to 20 percent lower than the national average.<sup>7</sup>

#### TALKING POINTS

- Increased youth representation on federal advisory committees allows for the engagement of an underrepresented group in health policymaking that will be affected most by reform measures.
- Millennials offer uniquely valuable contributions to health policy implementation.
- There is the potential for increased youth voter turnout as young voters observe tangible representation of their interests in national policymaking.

Ethically, too, there is considerable motivation. After all, Millennials are the demographic most likely to be affected by healthcare reforms in the long run, particularly since A) they form a demographic with some of the highest rates of underinsurance and B) the effects of most proposals, including those in the Affordable Care Act, will be implemented over a period of several decades.

#### NEXT STEPS

Potential partners include national nonprofit organizations dedicated to advancing health care for American youth, including Young Invincibles and Families USA. Aligning this initiative with the interests of existing NGOs and advocacy organizations will be critical to its success. Such partnerships must necessarily be paired with media outreach along with the support of public officials—including local members of Congress, who may benefit from the resulting increased youth voter support.

The challenge of deciding which young Americans to appoint to these advisory councils might prove a contentious issue. To address this concern, young adults should be considered for FAC placement in a manner analogous to existing appointments, including a rigorous application and referral process.

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# EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION: HEALTH LITERACY AND CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION

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*State medical boards should require Continuing Medical Education (CME) courses that teach physicians how to effectively relay healthcare information to patients.*

Although health literacy is necessary for patients to make informed decisions, problems arising from the widespread lack of patient health literacy are often overlooked. Health literacy is defined as “the degree to which individuals can obtain, process, and understand the basic health information and services they need to make appropriate health decisions.”<sup>1</sup> For example, Williams et al. showed that nearly half of patients with hypertension or diabetes illustrated inadequate health literacy concerning their diagnoses despite attending previously provided classes addressing their respective health conditions. Patients often lacked even basic health knowledge, including that exercise lowers blood pressure or that symptoms of shaking and weakness indicate low blood sugar.<sup>2</sup>

Low health literacy has several effects on individuals and society. According to the American Medical Association (AMA), poor health literacy is a stronger predictor of a person’s health than age, race, income, employment status, or education level. Seniors over the age 65, immigrants, racial minorities, and low-income citizens are most vulnerable to health illiteracy for a variety of reasons, including fewer educational opportunities, learning disabilities, cognitive decline, and impaired reading ability.<sup>3</sup> The financial costs of poor health literacy are staggering. Some reports estimate that problems with health literacy cost the U.S. between \$50 to \$73 billion per year.<sup>4</sup> Other publications report U.S. economic losses between \$106 billion and \$238 billion annually due to low health literacy, reflecting up to 17 percent of total healthcare costs.<sup>5</sup>

## KEY FACTS

- The National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL) reports that only 12 percent of American patients illustrate a “proficient” health literacy level, while 14 percent possess “below basic” literacy.<sup>6</sup>
- Over half of hypertension and diabetes patients did not know that exercise lowers blood pressure or that symptoms of shaking and weakness indicate low blood sugar.<sup>2</sup>
- According to the report “Low Health Literacy: Implications for National Health Policy,” the U.S. economy loses between \$106 billion and \$238 billion annually due to medical problems stemming from low health literacy, up to 17 percent of total healthcare costs.<sup>5</sup>

## ANALYSIS

The low health literacy problem often results from a lack of communication between healthcare providers and patients. The average American cannot comprehend medical terminology and diagnoses without training. Healthcare providers are often patients’ only source of health education, so teaching physicians to communicate more effectively with patients is crucial in improving national health literacy. If physicians learn to communicate health information clearly and effectively, patients will be able to utilize

pertinent health information to reduce the health risks associated with poor health literacy. The AMA offers CME programs in health literacy. However, these CMEs are not required for physician re-registration.<sup>7</sup> Requiring physicians to complete CME classes addressing health literacy and communication improves the overall health of patients by teaching doctors strategies to effectively convey vital healthcare information. CME classes provide physicians with techniques to convey crucial health information to patients with low health literacy. The workshops would also provide doctors with tools such as posters, fliers, and online resources to help explain medical procedures to patients. They would offer questionnaires to determine patient health literacy and strategies to improve medical offices to accommodate patients with low health literacy. Mandating that physicians attend CMEs targeting patient health literacy will guarantee that physicians are adequately trained to communicate health information to patients.

## NEXT STEPS

A nationwide requirement for health literacy CMEs is both difficult to approve and to implement. However, federal grants to state boards to develop health literacy workshops could encourage states to adopt health literacy CMEs as a requirement for physician re-registration. As the Affordable Care Act states in Section 5301, awarding grants to encourage health literacy CMEs “provide[s] training in enhanced communication with patients, evidence-based practice, chronic disease management, preventive care, health information technology, or other competencies as recommended by the Advisory Committee on Training in Primary Care Medicine and Dentistry and the National Health Care Workforce Commission.”<sup>8</sup> Mandating CMEs does not only yield health benefits, but also compelling financial benefits. In comparison to the hundreds of billions of dollars lost due to preventable problems with health literacy every year, the federal expense for accredited CME provision in 2011 totaled \$69 million.<sup>9</sup> Funding health literacy workshops would play a crucial role in encouraging state boards to require a health literacy CME as part of physician re-registration and represents an attempt to address the problem of poor health literacy in America.

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# SICKLE CELL DISEASE SCREENING PROGRAMS IN URBAN AFRICA

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*Establishing screening programs for sickle cell disease will streamline resource allocation, address the lack of current data, and reduce childhood mortality associated with the disease.*

Sickle cell disease (SCD) is caused by abnormal hemoglobin structure, causing deformed, sickled red blood cells that can clot easily.<sup>1</sup> Globally, 7 percent of humans carry an SCD variant.<sup>2</sup> Africa has high estimates of SCD-related mortality, particularly in children, but lacks reliable data to address the issue.<sup>3</sup> The most recent major studies tracking SCD found associated child mortality to be as high as 50-70 percent in Africa, but the studies were conducted in the 1970s.<sup>3,4</sup> Without relevant epidemiological data, providing medical aid to areas of greatest need is impossible. Systematic data collection allows countries to intensify efforts in areas that need the most help and can successfully decrease the incidence of other African diseases, including HIV/AIDS.<sup>5</sup> Because SCD lacks relevant data, it continues to have high incidence and mortality rates.

## ANALYSIS

To address the current lack of data, SCD prevalence and mortality information need to be systematically recorded. Newborn screening is an important and effective step in such data collection.<sup>6</sup> U.S. newborn screening resulted in a 68 percent reduction in SCD-related mortality in ages zero to three.<sup>7</sup> Once diagnosed, caretakers can plan and raise their families accordingly with education from health care providers and genetic counselors. Paired with education, data is key to this process, as it allow states to allocate resources for preventive measures.<sup>6</sup> Awareness and education have greatly reduced SCD childhood mortality rates because of the availability of treatments like prophylactic antibiotics and vaccinations.<sup>6,7</sup> Recent tests of a new pneumococcal vaccine (PCV7) for children have been dramatic in reducing bacterial infections, which are the main cause of SCD-related infant mortality.<sup>7</sup> Vaccines require no follow-up, an important factor where resources are scarce - parents simply bring their children to clinics. Newborn screening is more effective than other strategies because it helps decrease child mortality and can decrease SCD incidence.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, it is cheaper and less invasive than alternatives.

### KEY FACTS

- SCD is the most neglected tropical disease.<sup>10</sup>
- SCD is a global health problem, as 7 percent of the world carries some variant.<sup>2</sup>
- Over 300,000 are born with the disease annually.<sup>2</sup>
- Estimates for newborn screening costs for SCD range from \$3 to \$5.<sup>9</sup>
- Newborn screening has led to a 68 percent reduction in SCD-related infant mortality.<sup>7</sup>
- Like AIDS, a huge barrier to SCD treatment is stigmatization. Education is key to overcoming this problem.<sup>10</sup>

Revolutionary testing methods, such as IEF testing and HPLC testing, will continue to push testing costs down.<sup>8</sup> Both are inexpensive, ranging from \$3 to \$5 in some areas.<sup>9</sup>

Children with SCD and families in regions of Africa experience the disease firsthand. Sexually active persons may be unaware carriers, making awareness key to family planning. Parents of SCD patients should know how to get help to prevent complications. Also, governmental agencies and relief workers as local health departments and hospitals should implement newborn screening programs to decrease childhood mortality. They should allocate resources to sectors reporting the highest SCD incidence. Global Aid agencies (WHO, etc.) will be crucial in funding efforts once these critically afflicted areas are recognized.

## NEXT STEPS

Hospitals in Africa should test blood samples at birth in order to diagnose SCD immediately and track its current distribution.<sup>6,10</sup> Compiling relevant data must begin with accurate record keeping by health care providers. Given enough funding, this would translate to electronic systems capable of tracking the data. Newborn screening programs, clinics to treat sickle cell crises, educational centers, and prophylactic antibiotics and vaccines distribution would have to be established first. Several parallel educational programs exist for other prevalent diseases, including AIDS and malaria, so partnerships with these programs would more efficiently use resources, such as hospital space and genetic counselors.<sup>5,10</sup> Eventually, a “disease toolkit” could be used to simultaneously screen for common endemic diseases, including malaria, AIDS and SCD.

### TALKING POINTS

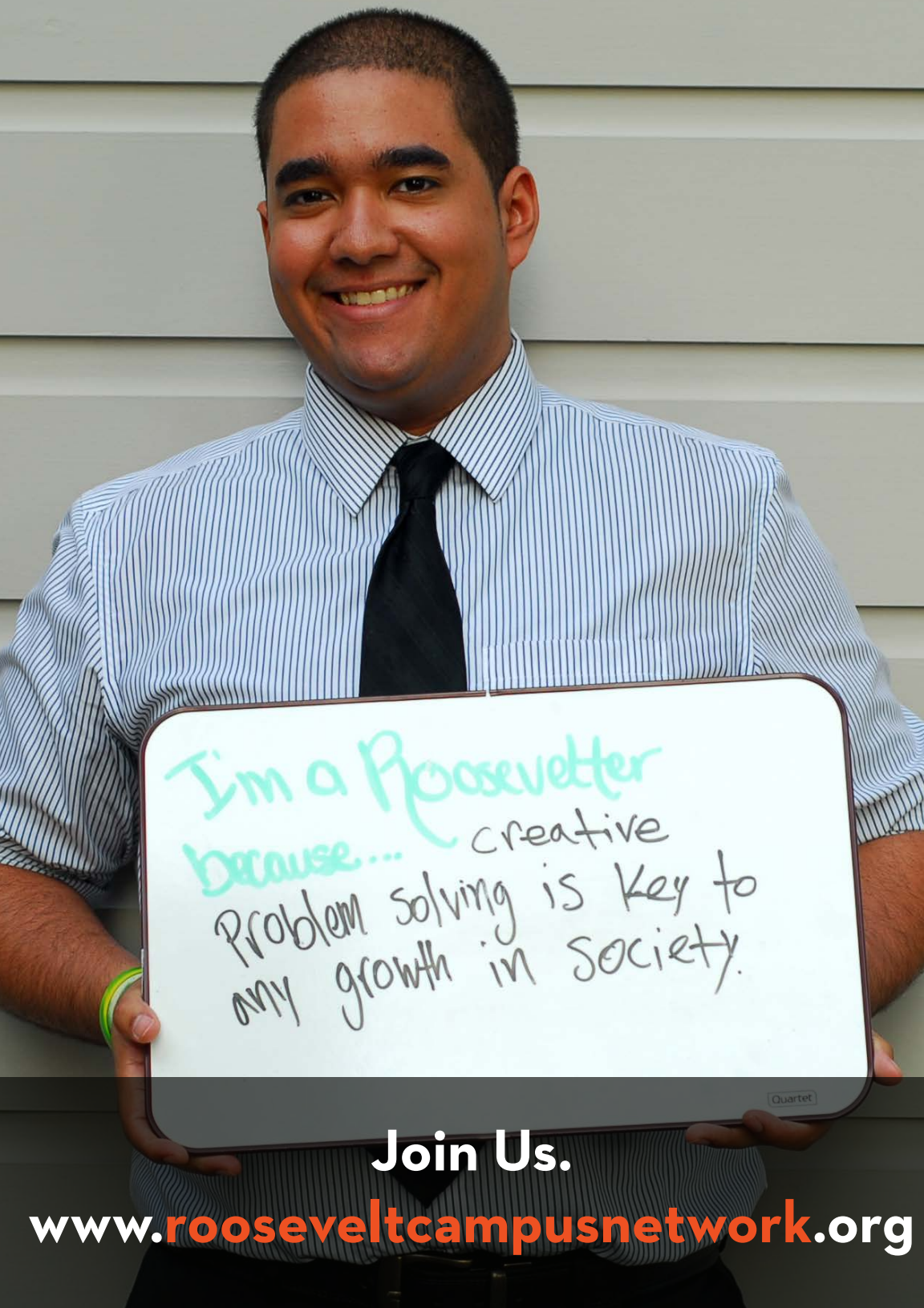
- Sickle cell disease does not get nearly the same amount of attention as other public health burdens in Africa, despite its prevalence. As a genetic disorder, it is not infectious and is often ignored as a public health issue.
- Whereas developing countries spend little to no money on genetic disorders, developed countries spend almost 40 percent of pediatric health care spending on genetic disorders.<sup>10</sup>
- The need for reliable data remains a challenge in achieving many of these objectives.

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