

# Confronting the Cost-of-Living Crisis

Americans are being squeezed by unaffordable necessities—housing, health care, energy, childcare, food—while profits for corporations soar. The Roosevelt Institute offers blueprints for deploying public power to deliver affordability and stability, not by tweaking markets but by reshaping them.

## Childcare and the Care Economy

- **The crisis:** Parents face childcare costs exceeding rent in many states. Care work is chronically undervalued, underpaid, and unstable.
- **Our solutions:**
  - Invest in public options for childcare, after-school care, and long-term care.
  - Treat care as the infrastructure it is, and invest in the supply needed to foster economic growth, labor force participation, and family well-being.

**Reference:** [Building the Future of the Care Economy](#)

## Food, Grocery Prices, and Corporate Power

- **The crisis:** Prices for basics like eggs and cereal have skyrocketed, while grocery chains use data-driven “surveillance pricing” to extract more from loyal customers. Junk fees and surge pricing are on the rise.
- **Our solutions:**
  - Negotiate directly with farmers, grocers, and suppliers to cap the cost of a basic grocery basket, modeled after Mexico’s *canasta básica*.
  - Enforce antitrust law, and challenge algorithmic price-fixing.
  - Crack down on deceptive junk fees and exploitative pricing in public venues.

**Reference:** [“Breathing Room for All: Tackling the Cost-of-Living Crisis with Progressive Policy Solutions”](#)

## Wages, Jobs, and Worker Power

- **The crisis:** For decades, wage growth stagnated while costs rose. But tight labor markets after the pandemic showed that these conditions are not inevitable—policy can deliver higher wages and lower inequality.
- **Our solutions:**
  - Embrace full employment as a macroeconomic goal, not just a possibility.
  - Expand labor rights, and experiment with sectoral bargaining to raise standards across entire industries.
  - Reimagine industrial policy to empower labor and support job quality.

**Reference:** [“Restoring a Democratic Economy”](#)

## Energy and Inflation

- **The crisis:** Volatile fossil fuel prices have driven inflation spikes and economic instability. When energy prices fall, inflation drops; when they rise, families suffer.
- **Our solutions:**
  - Transform the Strategic Petroleum Reserve into a Strategic Resilience Reserve that manages energy and mineral price volatility.
  - Use public reserves and market interventions to keep prices stable for essentials like electricity, gasoline, and food.

**Reference:** [“Buffer Stocks and Better Futures: A Strategic Resilience Reserve to Reshape Market Stability”](#); [“Energy Price Stability: The Peril of Fossil Fuels and the Promise of Renewables”](#)

## Health Care and Medical Debt

- **The crisis:** Even insured families face crushing medical bills. Medical debt now functions as a regressive tax on illness.
- **Our solutions:**
  - Claw back cuts to Medicaid passed in the recent budget reconciliation bill.
  - Shift from patchwork affordability to universal, public provision of care.
  - Support state and federal debt cancellation programs, and expand public options in insurance and delivery.

**Reference:** [“The US Medical Debt Crisis: Catastrophic Costs of Insufficient Health Coverage”](#)

**We cannot fix the cost-of-living crisis with tweaks around the edges.** Systemic challenges—corporate concentration, underinvestment, volatile markets—require public, democratic solutions. Roosevelt’s work shows the way: a vision for affordability rooted in economic justice, worker power, and the public good.



### About The Roosevelt Institute

**The Roosevelt Institute** is a think tank, a student network, and the nonprofit partner to the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum that, together, are learning from the past and working to redefine the future of the American economy. Focusing on corporate and public power, labor and wages, and the economics of race and gender inequality, the Roosevelt Institute unifies experts, invests in young leaders, and advances progressive policies that bring the legacy of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt into the 21st century.