PAID ADVERTISEMENT

DEAR VICE PRESIDENT BIDEN:

WE MUST FIGHT FOR A 21ST CENTURY NEW DEAL

We are descendants of the men and women who designed and implemented President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal policies during the Great Depression of the 1930s, the worst economic decline of the 20th Century.

We are tremendously heartened to hear that you believe your presidency "must be more ambitious than FDR's." We agree, and urge you to champion a 21st Century New Deal that will restore belief in a government that works for all Americans. Now, more than ever, the federal government *must* be on the side of ordinary people. We ask you to consider the following as key pillars of any new policy:

A **Transitional Jobs** program is needed to ensure that all Americans who want paid work can actually earn a living wage whenever there's a job shortage. We urge you to endorse the creation of a permanent, federal Transitional Jobs program, drawing on the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

Too few Americans qualify for **Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits**. The program needs to be permanently expanded to cover today's growing share of unemployed workers who are self-employed, contractors (often in the "gig" economy), or part-time. And with a substantial portion of the American workforce one step away from economic ruin, a much **higher federal minimum wage**—permanently indexed for inflation—is long overdue. Federal labor laws should make it easier and safer for workers to form a union and bargain collectively for a better life.

The way the federal government supplements earnings should be expanded to cover more workers and provide **bigger tax credits to wage earners**, those without children as well as working parents. The House of Representatives' HEROES Act takes a big step in the right direction.

While there have been encouraging first steps amid COVID-19, **paid leave for all workers** should be available. Whether in good times or bad, we all need temporary time off to care for a newborn baby, newly adopted child, or ailing relative. **Free or affordable childcare** should become a federal guarantee; it is essential to allowing people to work and to lifting working families out of poverty.

Health care is a necessity, and yet we still have a system where health insurance is tied to employment and costs are intolerably high. We need a new model based on the principles of universal coverage, good benefits, choice of health care providers, fair financing, and cost control. With over 115,000 deaths and more than two million cases of COVID-19, and rising, the nation must finally acknowledge that the creation of a more robust, equitable health care system is in our national interest.

The New Deal was also about protecting natural resources, people, and businesses from damage caused by greed or neglect within the marketplace. A 21st Century New Deal should **address climate change and other environmental assaults on the sustainability of our planet**, and focus on an **immediate transition to a renewable energy economy**. Bold legislative and regulatory action could bring tens of millions of new jobs, and safeguard workers, consumers, and investors. It is a matter of basic survival and may be our last chance; we cannot afford to lose this fight.

In the original New Deal, the rich paid their fair share, and the middle class flourished as never before. Today, the ultra-rich pay less than the middle-class, and leave the least affluent to foot the bill for running our country. A few tweaks won't cut it; **fundamental tax reform is required**.

The COVID-19 lockdown has disrupted education at every level across the nation. The country once again needs a federal program to **effectively address the racial disparity prevalent in our educational system**, relieve students of some of the crushing debt that follows them for years after graduation, and retool Americans for a rapidly evolving 21st century economy.

We recognize that **the New Deal left some huge problems unsolved, including structural racism, gender inequality, and voting rights.** The federal government must do much more to address these ills. The cherished right to vote, in particular, must be equitably available to all voting age citizens.

Our New Deal forebears understood that actions mattered far more than hollow words.

In the same spirit, we urge you—as a candidate, President, and fellow citizen—to embrace once more the New Deal's core principles of promoting economic security, a healthy society, a sustainable environment, and a level playing field for businesses big and small.

The American people deserve a government that boldly and actively serves the many, not the wealthy few. We urge you, from the very depths of our hearts, to give them that.

Sincerely yours,

James Roosevelt, Jr.

Grandson of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt

Henry Scott Wallace

Grandson of Henry A. Wallace, Vice President, and Secretary of Agriculture and Commerce

June Hopkins

Granddaughter of Harry Hopkins, WPA Administrator and Secretary of Commerce

Tomlin Perkins Coggeshall

Grandson of Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor

Harold M. Ickes

Son of Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior and Administrator of the PWA

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