Message Guidance on COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plans

Topline Messages

* Protecting everyone from the Coronavirus should be the first priority during this global pandemic and economic recovery proposals funded by taxpayers should not exacerbate public health threats, including climate change and environmental injustice.
* Economic recovery assistance paid for by taxpayers should put the public good first. Assistance should be directed to impacted workers and families suffering due to the COVID-19 response protocols.
* Taxpayer-funded assistance to industry, particularly energy and transportation industries, should include incentives to accelerate the development and use of clean energy sources and technology and invest in the future and a clean energy economy.

Talking Points

MOVING SWIFTLY

* The Coronavirus public health crisis demands strong leadership and bold action to protect our people and stabilize our economy, and we commend Congress for moving swiftly to address this crisis.

DON’T MAKE MATTERS WORSE

* As solutions are considered, it’s important to ensure that any actions taken in the short term do not exacerbate other ongoing crises - specifically the climate crisis and environmental injustice.
  + Policy prescriptions that address the coronavirus crisis should boost economic recovery and tackle these two crises as well.

AID TO INDUSTRY

* Aid packages for industry are important and because they are taxpayer-funded they should put families and workers first by cutting dangerous carbon pollution..
  + For example, additional government support for the fossil fuel industry, which already receives approximately $13 billion in annual subsidies, should come with a commitment to reduce carbon pollution from existing operations including facilities and transport.

* Taxpayer-funded support to industries should explicitly provide assistance to transition those industries to a clean energy future to both reduce toxic air and water pollution immediately and cut carbon pollution as well.
* Taxpayer-funded economic relief for the travel and tourism-based industries, including airline and cruise line corporations, should protect workers in those industries and require and encourage measurable steps toward clean energy use, energy efficiency, a carbon price for offsets, and air and water pollution restrictions that would mitigate climate change and environmental injustice.

INFRASTRUCTURE

* Stimulative public infrastructure investments should target low-wealth communities and communities of color suffering from environmental pollution and under-investment.
  + These projects should not come with strings attached that limit the ability of these communities to have a voice in how those infrastructure projects are planned and built.
  + These projects should also enhance the clean energy, drinking water and green infrastructure in these directly impacted communities.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

* Public Transit is suffering from sharply decreased ridership and revenues due to the COVID-19 containment protocols while still needing to provide this essential service.
  + Any economic recovery package should include a funding boost for transit agencies and specifically existing low and no emissions bus services.
  + This support should accelerate the availability of expanded clean transportation services and keep these economic lifelines available and on sturdier footing over the long term.

CLEAN ENERGY BUSINESSES

* Clean energy small and large businesses are also suffering economic hardship during this crisis, from residential rooftop solar installation companies to utility-scale wind and solar energy and energy storage projects.
* The pending expiration of needed clean energy tax credits will further harm this industry and its millions of workers.
* Congress should extend and expand existing clean energy investment tax credits and allow them to be refundable in the short term to shore up this rapidly growing piece of our infrastructure and jobs market.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

* Electric vehicle manufacturing has seen negative impacts from supply chain disruptions and reduced orders for zero-emissions cars, trucks, and buses.
* Extending the existing tax credit for electric vehicles and further incentivizing supply chain manufacturing in the US could boost jobs and competitiveness and the percentage of zero-emissions cars, trucks and buses on our roads.

LEADERSHIP

* We applaud continued leadership in responding swiftly to the covid-19 public health crisis, and reemphasize the need for smart investments to address the ongoing crises of climate change and environmental injustice.

TAKING ACTION

* The climate crisis continues as the coronavirus pandemic decimates our economy. The rapid and vast response to the covid-19 public health crisis reinforces our hope that a similar scale coordinated response is possible to tackle the looming climate crisis.
* We can and must bend the infection curve of covid-19 over the coming weeks and months to allow our healthcare system to handle the burden of severe illness that are materializing. Similarly, we can and must bend the carbon pollution curve to zero over the coming years and decades to allow our human and natural systems to recover and mitigate the impact of climate change and the environmental injustices associated with it.
* The Trump administration has made science denial an underpinning of their public policy which was never more evident in their initial approach to tackling COVID-19. They use the same approach in dealing with climate change and environmental injustice and a new approach, starting with these economic recovery packages, must be adopted.
* The Trump administration eliminated the U.S. pandemic response team in 2018, leaving us unprepared and vulnerable to a situation like the coronavirus. Similarly, Trump has removed climate scientists from the EPA and other federal agencies leaving us vulnerable to the worst impacts of climate change.