

A FAITHFUL BUDGET FOR ALL OF CREATION

Introduction:

A Faithful Budget must encompass a reverence for the entirety of Creation, making choices that protect our air, water, land, creatures, and human beings. It is the moral responsibility of our nation – and our sacred task as people of faith – to protect our ecosystems, work for environmental justice, and address climate change.

Our faith traditions teach us that we have been entrusted by God to care for Creation, on behalf of current and future generations. We live in a deeply interconnected world where the gifts of clear air, clean water, and majestic wild spaces, teeming with diverse life, must be protected. We must honor and sustain these gifts, not just for our use and enjoyment but also because of their intrinsic worth. Just as we are called to heal and care for one another, so, too, are we called to help heal the Earth so that humankind and all of Creation may sustainably coexist.

Yet we have failed to serve as good caretakers and protectors for much of Creation. We have degraded the essential goodness of our natural environment and threatened the health and wellbeing of countless families and communities in the United States and around the world. We have relied on dirty fossil fuels that emit climate-altering carbon emissions into the atmosphere, wreaking havoc on our already-fragile ecosystems.

A Faithful Budget should provide sufficient resources to protect all the life-sustaining gifts of Creation; it must reflect a commitment to healing the brokenness between people and the rest of the created world. It must safeguard God's creation, address the impacts of climate change on our most vulnerable and at risk brothers and sisters, and fulfill our moral obligation to future generations in the United States and internationally.

A Faithful Budget would fund the government's ability to celebrate the goodness of creation, stand with impacted and marginalized communities, protect life-sustaining gifts of air and water, invest in a sustainable energy future, and prioritize research and science.

Reflecting the Need:

- Clean air is necessary for life, yet more than half of all Americans -- 166 million individuals -- live in counties with unhealthy levels of ozone or particle pollution.¹
- Our unique and precious system of public lands provides a home for our fellow creatures and supports the whole of Creation; however, without sufficient funding for wise management, these lands may not be available for future generations.
- The infrastructure that supports clean water in the United States is in dire need of repairs, and \$1 trillion will be needed in the next 25 years to repair and expand U.S. drinking water infrastructure.²

¹ <http://www.lung.org/assets/documents/healthy-air/state-of-the-air/sota-2016-full.pdf>

² <http://www.waterworld.com/articles/print/volume-28/issue-4/departments/washington-update/new-report-highlights-staggering-costs-ahead-for-water-infrastructure-by-patrick-crow-washington-correspondent.html>

- Human-induced global climate change, which threatens the health and well-being of all of Creation, particularly the most vulnerable among us, is perpetuated by the use of carbon-intensive energy sources such as coal and oil, the prime energy sources in the United States.
- We have a moral obligation to vulnerable and at risk communities that are most impacted by the effects of climate change; however, our current federal funding commitments to international and domestic climate finance mechanisms are under threat, which could cause potentially irreparable harm to U.S. funded adaptation and mitigation efforts everywhere.

As people of faith, we are called to be present in places where the need is great and to advocate for a just and sustainable world. As a reflection of our nation's priorities, a Faithful Budget must address injustice and relieve suffering in all of these ways.

Celebrate the Goodness of Creation:

Our faith traditions teach that we have a divine responsibility to promote the flourishing of all of creation. We are grateful that past generations saw fit to set aside public space and protected lands that nourish both communities and ecosystems. Our public lands are thriving, offering immeasurable benefits, from higher soil and water quality to sustainable timber management.

As they have done since our earliest days, natural places and wilderness play a key role in shaping our relationship to our communities and to God. These lands and their intrinsic beauty and value must be maintained and used wisely. Those portions set aside by past generations were not intended to be used for energy or mineral development but rather to protect a part of the United States and the whole of Creation that, if destroyed, would be truly irreplaceable.

A Faithful Budget would:

- Provide land management agencies in the Departments of Interior and Agriculture with sufficient funding to ensure they remain:
 - 1) recreation spaces for all
 - 2) uncorrupted by drilling and timbering,
 - 3) vibrant ecosystems and habitats for God's creatures, especially threatened and endangered species.
- Provide support for lands protected under the National Landscape Conservation System.
- Fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which has been critical in protecting local watersheds and recreation lands around the country.
- Support the Department of Interior's responsibility to native and indigenous lands and peoples through programs like Federal Subsistence Management Program and the Indian Water Rights Office.

Stand with Impacted and Marginalized Communities:

Communities at home and around the world experience the devastating effects of climate change and environmental degradation. Our actions have disproportionate impacts on the health and quality of life for our brothers and sisters in low-income communities, marginalized groups, women, older people, children, urban and rural areas, Native American communities, and communities of color.

More than 6 million children in the U.S. currently live with asthma, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America research shows that one in six African American children have asthma. That same research shows that asthma rates are 80 percent higher in Puerto Ricans than whites. Communities that live in low-income housing located next to Superfund sites -- areas contaminated by dangerous levels of toxic waste -- often become "cancer clusters," or communities that face abnormally high rates of the chronic disease. Our budget must play an important role in funding policies that support healing and remediation for these disproportionately impacted communities. For example, our budget should ensure that people in Flint, MI will finally be able to drink safe and clean water.

We recognize that children, women, and workers bear the greatest health impacts of exposures to toxic chemicals and pesticides. For decades, chemicals and pesticides have been placed on the market without even knowing if they are safe. More than 80,000 industrial chemicals remain untested and unregulated. A number of pesticides and industrial chemicals are known or suspected to cause cancer, cognitive impairment, and fertility challenges, in addition to other health conditions. Exposures to chemicals of concern can affect someone throughout their lifetime and even future generations. Communities of color and low-income communities are particularly vulnerable as many toxic waste or chemical manufacturing plants are in or near these communities.

As the historically largest contributor to climate change, our nation must assume responsibility for our actions by supporting communities most affected by climate change, many living in developing nations on less than \$1 per day, to prepare for and adapt to climate change-related impacts. Without strong commitments from the United States and others, climate-related disasters and impacts will increase environmental pressures, exacerbate hunger, and contribute to regional instability. To this end, a Faithful Budget would prioritize addressing global climate change as it affects God's Creation and the people who live here, particularly those in the world's most vulnerable nations.

A Faithful Budget would:

- Fund the EPA's Environmental Justice program, which seeks to connect with those who have been historically underrepresented in environmental decision making to ensure all people enjoy the same protections from environmental and health hazards.
- Include adequate funding for international adaption and mitigation efforts that are related specifically to addressing global climate change in the world's most vulnerable developing nations.
- Fund the Health and Human Services' Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which provides federal funds to low-income individuals and families to help with utility bills, energy crises or pay for weatherization projects.
- Fully fund grants to clean up brownfields – former industrial sites that are environmentally contaminated with dangerous chemicals or radioactive waste – often located in low-income communities and communities of color.
- Support funding for vulnerable communities, including Alaska native villages, many which are already facing an existential threat due to climate change and sea level rise.
- Fully fund science and enforcement programs (especially for tribes and states) under the EPA that test and regulate pesticides, pesticide residues, and industrial chemicals to decrease harmful exposure to toxic chemicals for all people, and in particular children, women, communities of color, low-income communities, and workers who come into contact with chemicals.

- Fully fund implementation or strong rules to protect children, farmers, farmworkers from pesticides such as the Worker Protection Standard and Certified Applicator rules.

Protect Life-Sustaining Gifts of Air and Water:

All human beings deserve the life-giving gifts of clean air and clean water. Over the past four decades, great progress has been made in cleaning up the air and waterways due to bold funding and legislation. Enforced by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), landmark laws, including the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act, have greatly improved the health and quality of life of millions. A Faithful Budget provides the necessary resources to promote air and water quality standards and pollution control technology. In addition, a Faithful Budget should provide for improvement of these statutes as we learn more about the external factors that affect the quality of air and water to ensure a healthy future for all our communities and families.

Despite progress since the enactment of the Clean Air Act, over half of all U.S. residents live in areas of the country with unhealthy levels of air pollution.³ The public health risks of such pollution fall heavily on the most vulnerable among us: children, the elderly, communities of color, and those already suffering ill health. One striking example is from a [University of Minnesota study](#), which found disproportionate air pollution in minority communities.⁴ The study found that minorities were exposed to 38% more pollutants than whites, putting them at risk for heart disease and asthma. These statistics demand continued and sufficient funding for new and existing clean air protections, especially for vulnerable communities

The Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act help ensure that our water supply is clean and reliable. These consumer protections must be expanded; the pollution of waterways and the erosion of critical water infrastructure continue to be a public health threat, highlighted this year by the crisis in Flint, Michigan. In addition, the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund are both critical, providing matching funds for state and municipal agencies to maintain water quality. Billions of dollars will be needed in the coming decades to maintain current high levels of water quality in the United States.

A Faithful Budget would:

- Fully fund the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and our public health officials, so they can protect communities from pollution and mitigate its consequences.
- Equip the EPA's Office of Environmental Justice to ameliorate disproportionate pollution in minority communities.
- Heal those disproportionately impacted communities whose health has suffered as a direct result of air- and water-polluting industries and energy projects and ensure funding for a transparent and comprehensive assessment of new energy projects before they are approved.
- Provide critical funding for the Clean Water Act and Safe Drinking Water Act to ensure that our water supply is clean and reliable. This includes: the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System, the Water and Wastewater loan and grant program, and the Office of Water.

³ American Lung Association, State of the Air 2011

⁴ https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2014/04/15/pollution-is-substantially-worse-in-minority-neighborhoods-across-the-u-s/?utm_term=.d69aa8318727

Invest in a Sustainable Energy Future:

A Faithful Budget acknowledges the true social, economic, environmental, and public health cost of fossil fuels. Too many of our current methods used to extract and burn energy sacrifice the health and well-being of communities in exchange for profit. Practices such as mountaintop removal mining, hydraulic fracturing, and onshore and offshore oil drilling have had devastating impacts on the natural world and human communities. Studies have shown that increased birth defects, water contamination, and poor safety standards are just a few of the consequences of the extraction of oil, natural gas, and coal. Poor air and water quality are also consequences of our dependences upon these unsustainable sources of the bulk of our energy needs.

We must prioritize investments in renewable energy, including wind, solar, and tidal power, as well as reinvigorate support for energy efficiency programs to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. In addition to investment in expanding the use of renewable, sustainable energy sources, we must also expand our research and development programs that will promote cutting-edge technology for future generations. Those investments should also include investment in solar panel installation and wind turbine technician education, in order to prepare people to take advantage of new job opportunities and help the environment at the same time.

One critical step in reordering our national investments is to shift energy subsidies toward renewable energy and energy efficiency, and away from oil, coal, and other fossil fuel production. For too long, we have failed to acknowledge the true social costs of fossil fuels. Government subsidies and tax loopholes merely prop up these artificially inexpensive energy sources while endangering the health and well-being of our communities and our environment. We can no longer afford to provide financial support to industries that are unwilling to change their business practices in the face of global climate change, pollute communities and families, and permanently damage God's Creation. Energy subsidies must invest in industries that can produce energy without harming Creation and God's people.

A Faithful Budget would:

- End subsidies for the fossil fuel industry, including coal, oil (onshore and offshore), and natural gas.
- Provide energy subsidies, if any, for renewable energy research and development and energy efficiency technologies.
- Increase funding for research and development of new types of renewable energy and energy efficiency measures that can be distributed widely.

Prioritize Research and Science:

A Faithful Budget acknowledges the critical role that research and science play in keeping our communities and families safe. Climate research and science must be robustly funded so we can adequately measure, track, and respond to the threats of a warming planet. Our efforts to answer the call to be responsible stewards of the earth depend on a fact-based understanding of our changing planet and its effects on all of creation. Agencies that work to monitor and track air quality, conduct research on our warming oceans, develop new energy technologies, and track chemical safety measures are just a few of many important bodies that must be fully funded.

A Faithful Budget would:

- Ensure that basic weather monitoring, oceans, and earth science programs are fully funded across federal agencies, including grants typically given to universities and local communities.
- Fully fund climate research programs that make critical contributions around human health, air quality, ecosystems, water, and climate change.
- Provide adequate funding for energy innovation and research in clean energy technologies.
- Ensure that agencies like the Bureau of Land Management and Environmental Protection Agency are able to collect data on methane emissions and other greenhouse gas emissions.
- Promote scientific research in the fields of climate change, air and water quality, and chemical safety.