



Federal Job Guarantee Resolution

Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley (MA-07)

Today, we recommit to building a nation where every person can work, live, and thrive with dignity. The idea that all people should have a right to employment that ensures a dignified standard of living has deep roots in American history and remains an unfulfilled demand of the civil rights movement. Amidst the unprecedented pandemic, the employment crisis and a resounding demand for a more equitable economy, the need to affirm the right to meaningful, dignified work and a livable wage has never been clearer.

The right to a “useful and remunerative” job was the first and most fundamental right in President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s proposed Economic Bill of Rights. Sadie Alexander, the nation’s first Black economist, advocated a job guarantee to address racial discrimination against Black workers while improving labor market conditions for all workers. Martin Luther King, Jr. called for guaranteed jobs, and Coretta Scott King led a grassroots movement in support of a federal job guarantee.

Federal Job Guarantee

A **federal job guarantee** would provide every person with an enforceable legal right to a quality job on projects that meet long-neglected community, physical and human infrastructure needs, such as delivering quality care for children and seniors, building and sustaining 21st century transit systems, strengthening neighborhoods, and protecting the environment. Funded by the federal government and implemented locally in partnership with communities, the program would provide public jobs for all adults seeking employment.

By ensuring everyone has access to a good job with dignified wages, safe working conditions, health care and other benefits—including full worker rights and union protections—a **federal job guarantee** would address the current jobs crisis while laying the foundation for an equitable economic recovery. It would create a pathway to stable employment and begin to close the gaping income gap for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous workers who continue to face discrimination¹ and are often the “first ones fired, last ones hired”² during economic crises. It would also ensure economic inclusion for those experiencing discrimination in the labor market, including people with disabilities, transgender people, caregivers, and people with criminal records or involvement with the criminal legal system. And it would enable the just transition of workers in unsustainable sectors.

¹ <https://hbr.org/2017/10/hiring-discrimination-against-black-americans-hasnt-declined-in-25-years>

² <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/women-color-hardest-hit-pandemic-joblessness-n1235585>

At a time when 28 percent of full-time workers earn less than \$15 per hour³, a job guarantee would set a new standard for quality jobs, pressuring low-wage employers to increase wages and benefits. By hiring workers in the midst of a downturn, a permanent job guarantee would operate as an automatic stabilizer, maintaining consumer spending and protecting us from prolonged recessions and jobless recoveries — making the economy more resilient as well as more inclusive.

A federal job guarantee is a long-overdue policy that will help us reach true full employment, increase economic security, and reduce racial and gender inequities. It prevents the many social and economic costs of unemployment and invests in people, our communities and the planet. And it is the most powerful reform we can implement to create an equitable, resilient, and sustainable economy that delivers prosperity to all.

Job Guarantee Projects

Job guarantee projects would strengthen communities and retool our economy to achieve inclusive prosperity and leave no one behind. Projects would address national priorities as well as those put forward by local governments and community organizations – with the participation of communities impacted by structural racism, oppression, and disinvestment in the selection of projects. Projects would help to address systemic inequities that the federal government helped to create through racist policies such as redlining, urban renewal, and segregation.

Example job guarantee projects include:

- Ensuring the delivery of high-quality, professional care to children, seniors, and others in need of long-term support in family based, informal, and formal settings;
- Augmenting the staffing of public education and early childhood learning, including Head Start and preschool;
- Strengthening public afterschool programs, libraries, and recreational programs to provide lifelong learning and enrichment for people of all ages;
- Implementing community infrastructure and improvement projects that revitalize neighborhoods and increase accessibility, including:
 - Vacant and abandoned property cleanup; street and sidewalk repair; remodeling and modernization of schools and other public community-serving facilities; and maintenance and renovation of parks, playgrounds, and public spaces;
- Expanding emergency preparedness, and relief and recovery from natural and community disasters, including public health, natural disasters, and environmental emergencies
- Producing works of public art and documentation of American history akin to the WPA’s Federal Arts Project;
- Implementing environmental conservation, remediation, and sustainability initiatives and increasing the energy efficiency of buildings and our housing stock to address climate change;
- Rehabilitating and retrofitting our existing affordable housing stock to ensure safe, affordable, accessible, quality homes, and supporting the development of new affordable housing and social housing to address the nation’s housing crisis.
- Other projects that address public needs and can be implemented quickly.

Projects would create net new jobs and would not displace existing public sector workers, and racial equity and environmental sustainability would be key criteria for project selection.

³ https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Wages_15-hr#/?breakdown=2

Job Guarantee Compensation and Benefits

Wages for job guarantee employment would be no less than \$15 per hour and adjusted on a regular basis to ensure a rising standard of living. Benefits would include: health insurance consistent with that provided to existing federal government employees, paid sick days, paid family medical leave, retirement benefits, and vacation. Workers would be protected against discrimination and harassment by federal labor laws, and would be able to join public sector unions and bargain collectively for better working conditions and compensation. Workers' data would be protected and their privacy respected, and any creative, scientific, artistic, or cultural works produced by workers would be made open and available for public use.

All adult residents age 18 and over would be eligible for employment, including those with involvement in the criminal legal system. Young people ages 16 and 17 would be eligible for part-time employment. Jobs would be accessible to people with disabilities. Outreach and recruitment would be conducted in multiple languages and accessible formats. Jobs would be full-time or part-time, and short- or long-term, depending on worker needs.

Workers would build lasting skills through on-the-job training, as well as paid apprenticeships, credentialing, and other career-building opportunities. They would also receive supportive services, such as childcare and transportation assistance, access to information about reasonable accommodations and specific accommodations, as needed to access jobs and fulfill job responsibilities.

The federal job guarantee would meaningfully expand our social safety net and would not replace any existing safety net programs or benefits, including unemployment insurance.

Program Administration and Financing

The program would be administered by the Department of Labor and overseen by the Secretary of Labor in coordination with the Treasury Secretary, who would be responsible for dispersing funding. The Secretary of Labor would direct Treasury funds to local Employment Offices to manage job guarantee projects and match job seekers to projects, as well as cover any related capital and administrative costs. State, county, and local governments, as well as Tribal Nations, would help administer the program, engaging residents in community assessments and participatory processes to identify job guarantee projects to go into a Community Job Bank.

Given the current unemployment crisis, it is critical to swiftly launch and expand this program to all communities so that individuals can begin to work when it is safe to do so. During the initial start-up period, the Labor Secretary will target funds to areas of greatest employment need. The program should be fully functional within three years of its initiation.

This would be a permanent program for which the Treasury would provide the necessary funds as permanent, non-discretionary spending.