



Building a Better Future with a Just Infrastructure Plan

As people of faith, NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice knows the important role infrastructure plays in the lives of our families, communities, and nation. We know that our nation's infrastructure needs to be improved. We support strong investments in our nation's aging system – inclusive of mass public transit, roads, airports, bridges, water facilities, housing, and broadband technology – to boost our economy, improve efficient access to jobs, and connect people to each other.

The federal government must ensure that infrastructure investments are innovative, equitable, and generate long-term economic growth. NETWORK calls on Congress to pass a faithful infrastructure package that invests in the common good of today and tomorrow.

- 1. Funding for Infrastructure Investments Must Benefit the Common Good.** Everyone benefits from public infrastructure, so we all share the economic responsibility. Congress must responsibly finance infrastructure improvements, regardless of the user's ability to pay for it.
 - While it is tempting to promote public-private partnerships, strong evidence indicates that public-private partnerships lead to higher tolls, fees, and charges passed on to the taxpayer—who bear the brunt of additional costs since private corporations seek profit, not the common good.¹
 - A more equitable approach to financing infrastructure projects include the municipal bond market and reasonable increases in the transfer or gas tax.
- 2. Infrastructure Must Address Environmental Inequalities.** Toxic environments that inhibit the ability to live healthy, vibrant lives disproportionately affect rural families, low-income households, and/or communities of color. Congress must increase investments in our nation's infrastructure so that all communities have improved environmental standards and access to clean water and utilities.
 - A 1983 Government Accountability Office study found that race was a strong factor when choosing to place three-quarters of hazardous waste landfill sites in low-income communities of color in eight southeastern states. These neighborhoods disproportionately house cancer clusters, superfund sites, dilapidated schools and public housing riddled with lead-based paint and asbestos, and poor air quality—leading to poor health outcomes with lasting effects on children.²

- Congress must direct significant investments towards addressing current emergencies, such as the water crisis in Flint, Michigan and the crisis at the West Lake Landfill in Missouri, and preventing similar emergencies from happening in the future.

3. **Infrastructure Proposals Must Include Funding to Build and Repair Affordable Housing.**

There is bipartisan agreement in Congress that our nation lacks an abundance of safe, affordable housing. Investments in affordable housing create jobs in communities and attract developers to build quality schools, supermarkets, and banking centers thereby breaking down the chasm of segregated communities.

- Currently, more than one million people live in federally subsidized public housing that require more than \$26 billion in major capital repairs and deferred maintenance, according to a 2010 study.³
- Policymakers now have a rare opportunity to facilitate growth in these communities by rehabilitating and developing affordable housing units primarily occupied by families with young children, seniors, and people with disabilities.

4. **Infrastructure Projects Must Provide Living Wages, Benefits Including Paid Leave.**

Congress must respect the dignity of work so that workers can meet their needs with one job and reasonable hours while acknowledging the importance of leisure. Current measures are a good starting point, but the Administration and Congress can do more to expand benefits to address the growing need for greater workplace justice.

- Roughly 22% of the U.S. workforce—1.15 million people—is employed by companies doing business with the federal government. Currently, under Executive Order 13706, federal government contractors receive up to seven paid sick days for illness, family care, and absences related to domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking.⁴
- Congress must safeguard over 60 fair wage laws, including Davis-Bacon, which allow federal contractors and service employees make a living wage by protecting wages and benefits. Additionally, Congress must require private businesses under government contracts, as well businesses that spur development, to provide employees and independent contractors with paid leave benefits inclusive of paid sick days, maternity/paternity, and bereavement leave.

1. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/06/business/dealbook/trump-infrastructure-plan-privatized-taxpayers.html>

2. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/150/140159.pdf>

3. https://archives.hud.gov/news/2011/PH_Capital_Needs.pdf

4. <https://www.dol.gov/whd/govcontracts/eo13706/HowDolKnow.pdf>