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Recognizing the duty of the Federal Government to create a Federal job guarantee.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 14, 2024

Ms. PRESSLEY submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Education and the Workforce

RESOLUTION

Recognizing the duty of the Federal Government to create a Federal job guarantee.

Whereas, 75 years ago, Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights set forth the economic right to employment, recognizing that “everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment”;

Whereas a job guarantee was a central demand and unfinished legacy of the civil rights movement, such that—

(1) at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, Martin Luther King, Jr., joined A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin in demanding a job guarantee;

(2) in the subsequent decade, Coretta Scott King led a grassroots movement to enact a job guarantee;

(3) these leaders all built on and advanced the work of earlier pioneers like Sadie T.M. Alexander, the Nation’s first Black economist, who advocated a job guarantee to address racial discrimination against Black workers, while improving labor market conditions for all workers in the 1940s; and

(4) throughout the past 100 years, activists and intellectuals like Ella Baker and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party have all seen a Federal job guarantee as a key element of racial justice;

Whereas 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 and is a core plank of the Green New Deal movement and the People’s Justice Guarantee;

Whereas a job guarantee is essential to any effort to close the racial and gender income and wealth gap;

Whereas the United States has, on multiple occasions, including from 1945 to 1946, 1977 to 1978, and more recently, introduced legislation in an attempt to establish a full employment economy;

Whereas the commitment to full employment has been embraced by Congress and is part of the statutory mandate of the Federal Reserve System;

Whereas the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights recommended the enactment of a job guarantee as a “powerful tool” in the global fight against poverty and a way to contribute to a “just transition” toward a decarbonized economy in a 2023 report to the UN Human Rights Council;

Whereas a job guarantee has been recognized by key international allies as an important part of any green transition, including the European Union;

Whereas the United States has experienced decades of increasing inequality, racial economic exclusion and inequity, stagnant wages, declining union membership, and deteriorating workplace protections and conditions;

Whereas the United States has experienced decades of chronic underinvestment in its communities, workforce, infrastructure, public services, agricultural and industrial heartland, and natural environment;

Whereas the United States has, for decades, perpetuated a punitive, racist, ineffective criminal legal system that has systematically excluded millions of individuals from the workforce, failed to effectively promote reentry for previously incarcerated individuals, and forced incarcerated individuals to work in oppressive and exploitative conditions for effectively no pay;

Whereas the United States is experiencing a long-term economic crisis in which many workers are overworked, underpaid, and experience job and economic insecurity, with at least 100,000,000 Americans living in or near poverty, and 24 percent of full-time workers earning less than \$15 an hour according to the National Equity Atlas;

Whereas even at the peak of a business cycle, with a relatively low unemployment rate, many workers remain job insecure, earn insufficient income, and experience un- and underemployment;

Whereas the United States presently fails to recognize, support, or adequately remunerate the household and care

work of millions of women, parents, and familial caregivers;

Whereas economic prosperity in the United States has been highly unequal since its founding, largely falling on racial lines, with Black and indigenous Americans consistently earning less, owning less, and experiencing greater rates of economic precarity and poverty than White Americans;

Whereas the United States has not increased the minimum wage for years, and maintains subminimum wage carveouts for incarcerated people, people with disabilities, and tipped workers;

Whereas the United States presently exploits millions of undocumented workers, by forcing them to work in substandard conditions and below prevailing wages;

Whereas the United States is presently experiencing a generational crisis, as millions of younger and older workers face structural barriers to meaningful participation in the workforce;

Whereas the United States is underinvesting in critical human and physical infrastructure, including care and the environment, as well as underinvesting in creative, cultural, scientific, and knowledge industries, including higher education, libraries, public art, and journalism;

Whereas the United States is facing three overlapping and compounding crises, namely climate change, systemic racism, and extreme economic inequality, that together require a large-scale mobilization on the scale of World War II to address;

Whereas low-wage workers, and Black, Latinx, Native American, and other communities of color, as well as women

and people with disabilities are experiencing sustained economic distress and face mounting debts;

Whereas the United States is facing growing demand for care work and social services as the baby boomer generation retires from the workforce, and the senior population is expected to nearly double between 2018 and 2060;

Whereas the COVID–19 pandemic revealed vast inequities in community conditions by race, ethnicity, and income in the United States as well as the need to strengthen community infrastructure and services in the communities most vulnerable to disasters;

Whereas the COVID–19 pandemic demonstrated both the critical importance of individual job security and resilient production and distribution systems in the face of external ecological and social crises;

Whereas the COVID–19 pandemic, as well as the Silicon Valley Bank crisis, demonstrated that the United States Government is not financially constrained in its ability to respond to economic crises, and underscored the unique and broad capacity of Federal deficit spending and public investment to counteract and reduce the disruptive impact of economic shocks and recessions;

Whereas the historically low rates of unemployment during the recent economic recovery have failed to adequately provide sufficient or quality employment for people who face discrimination, including but not exclusively based on race, gender identity and expression, past record of criminal legal system involvement, and areas where economic investment is inadequate;

Whereas the historically low rates of unemployment during the recent economic recovery have failed to employ people

in jobs that prioritize social needs, such as mitigating climate change and addressing the care crisis, beyond the level that private investors and business owners determine will be sufficiently profitable for them;

Whereas the United States is facing new workforce challenges relating to privacy, worker autonomy, data gathering and surveillance, and automation, as a result of new technologies and the rapidly changing nature of industry, and these challenges have been accelerated by the COVID–19 pandemic;

Whereas the United States regularly suffers from high levels of underemployment, persistent joblessness among marginalized populations, and the growth of primarily low-quality jobs, resulting in—

(1) the loss of millions of hours of potential output, as well as deterioration of skills and productive capacity;

(2) lower community living standards, increased levels of working poverty and homelessness, and higher rates of individual and family suffering, including physical and mental health problems;

(3) higher rates of workplace discrimination, harassment, and a “last hired, first fired” approach that disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, including Black workers, women, LGTBQIA workers, workers with disabilities, formerly incarcerated workers, and young and elderly workers;

(4) an effective minimum wage of zero for those who cannot obtain employment; and

(5) an increasing fraction of the workforce forced to undertake multiple jobs, or engage in dangerous work with insufficient labor protections;

Whereas reliance on private investment alone has never historically succeeded in establishing a true full employment economy, in which every individual wishing to undertake paid work can do so;

Whereas reliance on education, skill development, job training, and other “indirect” policies alone have never historically succeeded in establishing a true full employment economy, in which every individual wishing to undertake paid work can do so;

Whereas untargeted, demand-increasing stimulus alone has never historically succeeded in establishing a true full employment economy, in which every individual wishing to undertake paid work can do so;

Whereas the Federal Government has the unique legal and financial capacity, relative to the local and State governments and the private sector, to credibly commit to funding the programs and institutions necessary to establish a true full employment economy, in which every individual wishing to undertake paid work can do so;

Whereas the Federal Reserve, on its own, has never historically succeeded in establishing a true full employment economy, in which every individual wishing to undertake paid work can do so, and by its own admission, lacks the necessary tools and capacity to do so;

Whereas Congress and the Department of the Treasury have a demonstrated track record of successfully funding and administering direct job creation programs, including the Works Progress Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps during the New Deal, which created over 6,000,000 jobs in less than a year;

Whereas Congress and the Treasury have a demonstrated track record of mass-scale mobilization of the economy, including during World War II, when the United States maintained an average unemployment rate of under 2 percent, and successfully doubled real output of the entire economy in under 6 years in the face of an unprecedented existential threat; and

Whereas President Biden has taken Executive action on the creation of a Civilian Climate Corps Initiative, in need of dedicated, permanent funding on a nondiscretionary basis, to mobilize the next generation of conservation and resilience workers and maximize the creation of accessible training opportunities and good jobs: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Rep-
2 resentatives that—

3 (1) it is the duty of the Federal Government to
4 create a Federal job guarantee—

5 (A) to finally eliminate the moral and eco-
6 nomic scourge of involuntary unemployment;

7 (B) to establish a true full employment so-
8 ciety, in which anyone who wants to undertake
9 paid work in the service of the community and
10 the environment has ample opportunities to do
11 so;

12 (C) to collectively achieve the greatest pos-
13 sible level of socially and ecologically sustain-

1 able prosperity, and share the fruits of that
2 prosperity equitably among all people;

3 (D) to empower the working class by offer-
4 ing every worker, regardless of his or her back-
5 ground, capacity, or status, the opportunity to
6 earn a fair, living wage, and to organize with
7 fellow workers to advocate for common inter-
8 ests;

9 (E) to ensure every person in the United
10 States has genuine and meaningful opportuni-
11 ties for education, training, career advance-
12 ment, and choice with respect to workforce par-
13 ticipation;

14 (F) to update and expand our under-
15 standing of socially necessary or useful work to
16 include historically underrecognized and uncom-
17 pensated labor, including domestic and social
18 care, ecological preservation, and cultural, sci-
19 entific, and creative work;

20 (G) to promote justice and equity by stop-
21 ping current, preventing future, and repairing
22 historic oppression and discrimination of indige-
23 nous peoples, communities of color, migrant
24 communities, deindustrialized communities, de-
25 populated rural communities, the poor, low-in-

1 come workers, women, the elderly, the
2 unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth
3 (referred to in this resolution as “frontline and
4 vulnerable communities”);

5 (H) to complete the unfinished legacy of
6 the civil rights movement and the New Deal,
7 and meet the contemporary challenges posed by
8 the climate crisis identified in the Green New
9 Deal resolution; and

10 (I) to meet the broader social and eco-
11 nomic challenges of the 21st century through
12 appropriate public investment, socially coordi-
13 nated planning, and industrial cooperation;

14 (2) the goals described in subparagraphs (A)
15 through (I) of paragraph (1) (the “job guarantee
16 goals”) should be accomplished through an imme-
17 diate national mobilization—

18 (A) to establish and honor a legally en-
19 forceable right to fair, dignified, and decently
20 remunerated employment for all eligible individ-
21 uals living in the United States (hereafter the
22 “right to employment”);

23 (B) to establish and honor a bill of work-
24 ers’ rights, as a complement to the right to em-
25 ployment, that addresses issues related to work-

1 er exploitation, discrimination, harassment,
2 compensation, privacy, autonomy, choice of em-
3 ployment, working conditions, the right to orga-
4 nize and collectively bargain, suitable accommo-
5 dation for people with disabilities, protection
6 and expansion of existing safety net programs,
7 and other related concerns (hereafter the
8 “Workers’ Bill of Rights”);

9 (C) to establish, implement, and admin-
10 ister a comprehensive and diverse range of so-
11 cially necessary and useful public projects, re-
12 flective of community and regional needs, in-
13 cluding direct public job creation programs, and
14 to support related education, training,
15 credentialing, and career development pro-
16 grams, to ensure workers enjoy meaningful
17 choice and appropriate opportunities for growth
18 and advancement in their chosen area of em-
19 ployment (hereafter the “enabling programs”);

20 (D) to design and implement the right to
21 employment, Workers’ Bill of Rights, and ena-
22 bling programs through transparent and inclu-
23 sive consultation, collaboration, and partnership
24 with frontline and vulnerable communities,
25 labor unions, worker cooperatives, civil society

1 groups, State and local governments, academia,
2 and businesses;

3 (E) to take ecological and equitable con-
4 cerns into consideration when designing and im-
5 plementing the right to employment, Workers'
6 Bill of Rights, and enabling programs, as well
7 as any other related infrastructural and admin-
8 istrative institutions and procedures;

9 (F) to take any and all necessary steps to
10 ensure, wherever possible, that all people ben-
11 efit from the collective prosperity resulting from
12 the establishment of the right to employment,
13 Workers' Bill of Rights, and enabling programs;
14 and

15 (G) to adequately and appropriately fund
16 these efforts on a permanent, nondiscretionary
17 basis, using Congress power of the purse,
18 through a combination of Federal support to
19 local and State governments, and various direct
20 Federal grant and investment programs;

21 (3) the national mobilization toward a Federal
22 job guarantee would include projects that—

23 (A) strengthen communities, retool our
24 economy, achieve inclusive prosperity, and leave
25 no one behind;

1 (B) address national priorities as well as
2 those put forward by local governments and
3 community organizations, with the participation
4 of communities impacted by structural racism,
5 oppression, and disinvestment in the selection
6 of projects;

7 (C) create net new jobs, without displacing
8 existing public sector workers; and

9 (D) prioritize racial equity and environ-
10 mental sustainability, including but not limited
11 to ensuring a just transition for workers and
12 frontline communities currently involved in
13 unsustainable industries;

14 (4) job guarantee workers would be employed in
15 a range of ways, including but not limited to—

16 (A) ensuring the delivery of high-quality,
17 professional care to children, seniors, and oth-
18 ers in need of long-term support in family
19 based, informal, and formal settings;

20 (B) augmenting the staffing of public edu-
21 cation and early childhood learning, including
22 Head Start and preschool;

23 (C) strengthening public afterschool pro-
24 grams, libraries, and recreational programs to

1 provide lifelong learning and enrichment for
2 people of all ages;

3 (D) implementing community infrastruc-
4 ture and improvement projects that revitalize
5 neighborhoods, including vacant and abandoned
6 property cleanup, street and sidewalk repair, re-
7 modeling and modernization of schools and
8 other public community-serving facilities, and
9 maintenance and renovation of parks, play-
10 grounds, and public spaces;

11 (E) expanding emergency preparedness,
12 and relief and recovery from natural and com-
13 munity disasters, including public health, nat-
14 ural disasters, and environmental emergencies;

15 (F) producing works of public art and doc-
16 umentation of United States history akin to the
17 Works Project Administration's Federal Art
18 Project;

19 (G) implementing environmental conserva-
20 tion, remediation, and sustainability initiatives,
21 increasing the energy efficiency of buildings and
22 our housing stock to address climate change,
23 and building climate resistance through pro-
24 grams such as the Civilian Climate Corps;

1 (H) rehabilitating and retrofitting our ex-
2 isting affordable housing stock to ensure safe,
3 affordable, quality, energy-efficient homes, and
4 supporting the development of new affordable
5 housing and social housing to address the Na-
6 tion's housing crisis;

7 (I) producing creative, scientific, artistic,
8 or cultural works, which would then be made
9 open and available for public use; and

10 (J) supporting other projects that address
11 public needs and can be implemented quickly;

12 (5) job guarantee jobs would pay no less than
13 \$25 per hour, adjusted on a regular basis to ensure
14 a rising standard of living, and would not replace
15 any existing safety net programs or benefits, includ-
16 ing unemployment insurance;

17 (6) job guarantee jobs would also offer benefits,
18 including—

19 (A) health insurance consistent with that
20 provided to existing Federal Government em-
21 ployees;

22 (B) paid sick days and family leave;

23 (C) retirement benefits; and

24 (D) paid vacation;

25 (7) job guarantee workers would—

1 (A) be able to join public sector unions and
2 bargain collectively for better working condi-
3 tions and compensation;

4 (B) be protected against discrimination
5 and harassment by Federal labor laws;

6 (C) have their data protected and their pri-
7 vacy respected; and

8 (D) be empowered to develop lasting skills
9 through on-the-job training, as well as paid ap-
10 prenticeships, credentialing, and other career
11 building opportunities;

12 (8) job guarantee work would—

13 (A) be made available—

14 (i) on a full-time and part-time basis
15 for adult residents age 18 and over, de-
16 pending on worker needs, including those
17 with involvement in the criminal legal sys-
18 tem;

19 (ii) on a part-time basis for young
20 people ages 16 and 17;

21 (iii) for short- or long-term periods,
22 depending on worker needs; and

23 (iv) to all people on a nondiscrim-
24 inatory basis, including people with disabil-
25 ities;

1 (B) include outreach and recruitment, con-
2 ducted in multiple languages;

3 (C) provide workers and aspiring workers
4 with support services, such as childcare and
5 transportation assistance, and specific accom-
6 modations, as needed to access jobs and fulfill
7 job responsibilities; and

8 (D) meaningfully expand our social safety
9 net and would not replace any existing safety
10 net programs or benefits, including unemploy-
11 ment insurance; and

12 (9) the job guarantee program would be admin-
13 istered by the Department of Labor and overseen by
14 the Secretary of Labor in coordination with the Sec-
15 retary of the Treasury, who would be responsible for
16 dispersing funding, and in particular—

17 (A) the Secretary of Labor would direct
18 Treasury funds to local employment offices to
19 manage job guarantee projects and match job
20 seekers to projects, as well as cover any related
21 capital and administrative costs, with funds tar-
22 geted during the initial 3-year startup period to
23 areas of greatest employment need; and

24 (B) State, county, and local governments,
25 as well as territories and Tribal Nations, would

1 help administer the program, engaging resi-
2 dents in community assessments and
3 participatory processes to identify job guarantee
4 projects to go into a community job bank.

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