

THE REAL WEALTH OF AMERICA PUBLIC POLICY INITIATIVE

A Strategy to Advance Healthy Economic Priorities

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In this acute economic crisis, new thinking and strategies are critical for transforming the U.S. economy towards a more just prosperity. By not investing enough in human infrastructure, starting in childhood, we are harming our nation's economy and quality of life. Now is the time for a new framework for sound economic policies, not just a piecemeal approach. The "Real Wealth of America Public Policy Initiative" represents a new social compact for the United States to live up to its promise of peace and prosperity for all – and to be successful in the global economy.

Our nation already has requirements for economic and environmental impact statements. The Real Wealth of America Initiative proposes the addition of statements measuring the effect of any new program or legislation on our real wealth: our international standing in health, education, equality, democracy, human capacity development, and other quality of life indicators (please see attached examples). This initiative will help shift funding priorities by providing sample metrics and other foundations for policy makers to direct federal agencies, such as the Department of Commerce, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Department of Health and Human Services, to further develop and publicize metrics to advance sound priorities. It is designed to shift public funding priorities in healthier and more realistic directions.

The governing values for measuring and promoting the Real Wealth of America are:

- *Recognizing that the contributions of our people are the real wealth of our nation— and hence the need to invest in human capacity development, starting in early childhood*
- *Recognizing that especially for the post-industrial knowledge-information economy our most important capital is high quality human capital*
- *Recognizing the need to give greater visibility and value to the work of caregiving in both the market and non-market economies*
- *Recognizing the value of investing in our human infrastructure for our nation's health, our families, our communities, our democracy, and our economic success*

Sample components of Real Wealth Impact Statements (RWIS) – in comparison with other nations' indicators – as measures of U.S. global competitiveness would include the following:

1. Health
 - pre-natal and childhood health
 - infant and maternal mortality
 - mental stress and drug and alcohol dependence levels
 - workforce stress levels
 - unwanted pregnancies and reproductive health care availability
 - food and drug safety and national nutritional standards
 - availability and quality of elder care

2. Families

- availability of parenting education in schools
- family violence levels and types of discipline in families
- teenage pregnancy rates and family planning programs
- equality between women and men
- nontraditional families recognized in law
- tax credits, benefits, and retirement security for family caregivers

3. Education

- early childhood education: funding and participation in quality pre-school and kindergarten
- after-school and other youth programs
- level of access, resources, & opportunities based on race, gender, class, ability, age, geography, etc.
- school teacher pay and benefits, retention, job training, and continuing education
- comprehensive sex education, as well as education for mutually respectful relations

4. Workplaces

- paid vacation time, sick days, and parental leave
- childcare availability at worksites
- paycheck fairness and equal pay for comparable worth
- workplace recycling programs and environmental hazard protections
- right of workers to organize

5. Elderly

- programs to support community engagement of elders and continuing education
- local facilities, agencies, and other resources for aging with dignity
- adequate Social Security benefits that are equal and fair between women and men
- support for home care, chronic care management, and coordination of care programs

6. Democracy and Equality

- education for democracy in schools
- free media, including internet
- representation of women in national legislatures
- levels of voter registration, voter participation, and reliable vote counting
- entertainment and news media that do not perpetuate stereotypes and inequality
- fair credit and lending practices for equality of opportunity

7. Other Measures of Quality of Life

- poverty and hunger levels, broken out for women and families
- crime levels, broken out for violent and non-violent crimes
- quality of environment including toxicity levels, water quality, etc.
- enforcement of antidiscrimination laws on gender, race, ability, age, etc.
- equal valuing of “feminine” and “masculine” activities
- comparison of military spending with funding for human needs and opportunities

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