



Local Progress: 2016 National Policy Platform

This summer the members of Local Progress are coming together for our fifth annual national convening. We are united by our commitment to shared prosperity, livable and sustainable communities, equal justice under the law, and good government that services the public interest. As representatives elected into local office, we see first-hand how government decisions affect the lives of our communities.

We fiercely love our cities, towns and counties and share a vision of local communities that are inclusive, equitable, livable, sustainable, and just. Unfortunately, that vision is threatened by crises we witness daily: growing economic inequality, rising sea levels and other environmental injustices, police brutality, displacement and a lack of access to affordable housing, insufficient funding for infrastructure and public services, and the vilification of African-Americans, immigrants and refugees, LGBTQ communities and Muslim-Americans.

Local Progress members across the country are creating innovative policies to address these challenges. However, in order to realize this vision, local officials must have help from Washington DC. The devastation wrought by the water crisis in Flint brought national attention to a reality that is being felt in communities across the country: localities are starved of the resources and supports needed to provide crucial services for our residents, and especially for low-income families and communities of color. As public servants, we believe in the power of government to improve lives in our communities. However too often federal and state governments are an obstacle, not an aid, to advancing local policies and programs that address these urgent issues.

This election year, as we witness hatred and xenophobia being marshalled in support of a reactionary national agenda, we stand together in support of a different vision for making America great: economic inclusion, racial equity, sustainable communities, and justice for all. We believe that the Federal Government can and must play a central role in supporting localities' efforts to create a more just and equitable society. This is our vision for that collaboration.

Shared Prosperity

Over the past decade, many of our localities have adopted innovative policies to increase access to the basic components of shared prosperity: good jobs, affordable housing, and quality education. But there are limits to what we can achieve through local policy, without support and investments from the Federal Government.

1) High Quality Jobs and Worker Protections:

- Cities have taken the lead in advancing workers' rights and opportunities, from the Fight for \$15 to fair-scheduling to paid sick days. To advance these efforts, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) should give grants, technical assistance and guidance to cities to encourage enforcement of labor standards (wages, hours, scheduling, paid sick days, etc.), prioritizing models that include active roles for community-based organizations and worker centers in order to expand local capacity.
- The DOL should establish legal guidance and award demonstration grants to help cities implement successful "targeted hiring" programs to provide jobs for low-income and disadvantaged workers, including those with criminal records. Federal agencies should explore and expand programs similar to the DOT's pilot program on local hiring.
- Amend federal regulations governing procurement to permit local government recipients of federal grants to promote contracting with businesses that are owned by women and people of color, and the adoption of local and targeted hiring measures.
- Enable cities to advance job quality, job access and affordable housing through government contracts by requiring that States waive prohibitions on such conditions on any path-through grants to localities.
- The Federal Government should convene states and localities working on innovative models to support and protect workers in the "on-demand," freelance, and independent work sectors (where workers are not currently protected by federal labor law), by advancing the rights of these workers to organize, access benefits, and be protected against wage theft and civil rights violations. New federal policies should be developed out of this collaboration.

2) Schools that Support our Students & Communities:

- Congress should appropriate funds this year and establish a 10-year goal to reaching full funding for Title I, including requiring states to pay their share, to adequately support all students living in poverty.
- The federal government should provide grants and technical support localities to adopt and expand high quality child care and pre-K for all families.
- The US. Department of Education (DoED) should provide funding and technical support to school districts for the creation of community schools with wrap-around services that include attention to academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement.
- The DoED should promote teacher training that supports the success of students of color and in low-income communities including promoting effective teacher practices for classroom management, developing strategies to incorporate brain science, understanding of trauma, and social and emotional development into teacher training programs.

- The DoED should work with localities to end the school-to-prison pipeline by promoting restorative justice programs and requiring schools to assess and improve the racially disparate treatment and impact of discipline policies. Federal agencies should monitor and enforce federal civil rights laws as applicable to traditional and charter schools, and provide funding through the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) for training, staffing and supports to schools implementing restorative justice programs.
- As a condition for federal funding to open charter schools, the DoED should require localities to evaluate the impact that the charter schools will have on equity and segregation and on the entire local school system, and require charters to comply with federal school discipline guidance and develop systems of audits and other measures to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse.
- The DoED should provide active support, funding, and technical assistance for local school districts working to advance school integration, develop a nationwide reporting system that highlights persistent segregation and efforts to reduce it, and offer ongoing legal guidance and support on tools and best practices (such as “controlled/balanced choice” and other Constitutionally-permissible models). Where local school districts are complicit in perpetuating segregation, the Justice Department and DE should collaborate on investigations and enforcement.

3) Access to Quality, Affordable Housing:

- The President and Congress should greatly expand the creation and preservation of affordable housing, with dramatically increased investments in Section 8 vouchers, public housing, and the National Housing Trust Fund to extend these crucial benefits to the 14.5 million Americans who need and are qualified for affordable housing, but do not receive it.
- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) should require long-term or permanent affordability provisions when federal subsidies are used, ensuring that homes remain affordable, instead of putting tenants at risk of “expiring use” crises and displacement.
- The federal government should expand and strengthen its investments in programs to prevent and address homelessness, including permanent supportive housing, rapid re-housing, and supportive services for veterans and youth.
- To prevent blight and promote affordable homeownership, HUD and the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) should work with local government to ensure that mortgages sold through the Distressed Asset Stabilization Program (DASP) prioritize non-profit and government purchasers over for-profit speculators and require that all borrowers must be evaluated for principal reduction.
- HUD should fight segregation and promote access to opportunity by providing support, including technical assistance and pilot grants to help municipalities develop robust and comprehensive plans under the Affirmatively Further Fair Housing rule (AFFH), and by encouraging the use of housing subsidies for preservation of affordable housing in high-opportunity neighborhoods near amenities such as transit, quality schools, or job centers. The U.S. Department of Transit (DOT) should incentivize applicants for competitive grants to co-locate with affordable housing projects in these neighborhoods.
- To prevent displacement and maximize opportunities for low-income households in “strong market” cities, localities should be given credit for adopting practices that reduce displacement – such as rent control, just cause eviction, and other protections for renters – as part of their AFFH plans.

Sustainable & Livable Communities

In 2016 we have seen tremendous threats to our communities – especially low-income communities of color.

Rising sea-levels led to our nation’s first ‘climate refugees’ in Isle de Jean Charles, Louisiana. Water contamination upended lives from Flint to Newark to Newburgh, NY. Leaking gas pipelines did the same in Porter Ranch, CA. At the same time, our local communities have the most to gain from investments in public transit, clean energy, air, and water, solid waste reduction, parks, and safer streets. We need federal support for innovative local strategies to combat climate change, invest in sustainable and resilient infrastructure, and promote healthy and livable communities.

1) A Just Transition to Renewable Energy:

- The federal government should help localities create plans for a just transition to a 100% clean energy future by offering federal technical assistance for planning, implementation, evaluation and policy analysis; provide software to collect and analyze data for clean energy adoption, costs and performance; and offer bonding authority to finance retrofit work. In order to receive such assistance, the Federal Government should require all climate action plans to address racial and economic justice, including mitigation strategies for frontline communities experiencing environmental injustice.
- Congress should provide funding to local governments to facilitate the adoption of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies, including: resources to help communities reduce energy costs for low-income families; funding for a just economic transition and job training in communities dependent on the fossil fuel industry; a database of local and state incentives for renewables and efficiency; expansion of distributed renewable and energy efficiency grants (such as PACE); and incentives for local shared renewable programs that serve renters, low-income residents, and multi-family dwellings.
- Federal agencies should adopt strong regulations to encourage the use of renewable energy by localities and expand recognition programs like the Environmental Protection Agency’s Green Power Partnership. And they should reorient energy market incentives to so that utilities are incentivized become more energy efficient and advance renewable power generation.

2) Healthy, Livable and Sustainable Communities:

- The federal government should work with localities to upgrade and maintain the nation’s drinking water and wastewater systems, with attention to the reality that there continues to be severe disinvestment from the health and well-being of low-income communities and communities of color that must be reserved and repaired. It should prioritize both watershed protection and water infrastructure upgrades and make water distribution and use fair and equitable. It should significantly increase allocations to state revolving loan funds, encourage funds to adopt smarter investment strategies, promote the adoption of more energy-efficient technologies and practices at drinking-water and wastewater facilities, and encourage efficient solutions to water-quality and treatment challenges.
- Poor water quality due to aging water lines and plumbing fixtures is a problem that many school districts, including Chicago, Baltimore and Newark, are facing. Congress should pass a law requiring

regular testing for lead and funding and the Federal Government should provide funding and technical expertise for remediation.

- Federal funds – including an expansion of TIGER and Sustainable Communities Grants – should encourage and enable localities to plan for and invest in smart and equitable growth. This involves genuine community planning, upfront investments in infrastructure that promote livable neighborhoods (schools, open space, transit and transportation, complete streets, energy, water, waste, resiliency), a mix of uses, mixed-income housing and strategies to prevent displacement, and connections to good jobs and equitable economic development.
- DOT should prioritize funding that allows localities to create safe, healthy, sustainable communities, including investments in “complete streets” that are safe for all users, walking and cycling infrastructure, and “Vision Zero” initiatives (including engineering, education, and enforcement) to reduce deaths and injuries from traffic crashes.
- The Federal Government should continue to support the Healthy Food Financing Initiative, which provides grants and low-cost loans to retailers who maintain or establish markets selling fresh, healthy food in underserved communities and explore ways to incentivize urban agriculture.

3) Transit and Infrastructure Investments that Support Equitable Communities:

- DOT should establish equity and economic mobility indicators and performance measures for transportation projects, evaluating how they will impact job access via public transportation, affordable housing in the vicinity of new transit investments, transportation costs and commute times for low-income residents and communities of color.
- DOT should adopt equity and sustainability assessments in regional transportation planning to evaluate how well funding proposals submitted by local jurisdictions and states address access, mobility, health, choice, greenhouse gas emissions and economic-opportunity goals for the diverse communities the projects will serve. DOT should work with a handful of local leaders to develop a toolkit they can use to implement this rule.
- As the Executive Branch determines how to leverage transportation innovations like on-demand ride services and self-driving vehicles to bring benefits to low-income communities and communities of color, it should require that local governments and rideshare providers create plans that prioritize public benefit including the creation of high quality jobs and the provision of transit for underserved communities.
- Federal Highway Trust dollars should flow directly to local governments, rather than through state governments. The Federal Government should ensure that areas of greatest need are not being short-changed by the distribution of these funds, in part by continuing President Obama’s TIGER program that allows city governments to apply directly in a more competitive process for multi-modal grants. Funds for transit aid should be targeted to the much-needed maintenance of older existing infrastructure, particularly in high poverty areas.
- The Federal Reserve should establish a program to provide zero-interest loans to localities under its Section 14(2) powers to facilitate investment in infrastructure. The Fed should permit localities to roll over their short term bonds in order to facilitate medium-and long-term lending.

Equal Justice Under the Law

Local elected officials work hard to maintain the safety, inclusion and fair treatment of all residents in our communities. At a time in which Immigrant Customs Enforcement raids and the intensification of xenophobic rhetoric, escalating conflicts and distrust between police and our communities, and a wave of state policies denying equal access and treatment to LGBTQ communities have created an environment of fear and distrust, Local Progress members have continued their commitment to an open, just, and inclusive society.

1) Immigrant Inclusion and Empowerment:

- Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) should end the practice of asking local law enforcement agencies to hold or turn over individuals on the basis of suspected immigration violations.
- Civil immigration information should be removed from federal criminal database checks so as to permit local policing to focus on public safety, without being dragged into civil immigration enforcement. The DOJ should disentangle all civil immigration information from the FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database by removing the Immigration Violator File.
- Immigrants in deportation proceedings have no constitutional right to counsel. Without a lawyer, it is impossible for an individual to receive basic due process in his or her removal hearing. The Federal Government should provide funding to municipalities to increase the number of attorneys available to offer free removal defense to immigrants facing deportation.
- The Federal Government should create place-based awards or block grants to localities – with a focus on communities with recent immigrants – to provide funding and technical assistance to support efforts in creating and implementing a multi-sector plan around civic, linguistic, and economic integration.
- Private companies administer more than half of the detention beds in immigration detention facilities. The Department of Homeland Security should end the practice of contracting with private prison corporations for the management of facilities.
- Immigrant workers should be able to enforce their employment and labor rights without fearing the threat of deportation. The Department of Homeland Security should provide immigrant workers involved in labor disputes relief from deportation and work authorization, as they enforce their rights against their employers.
- The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) should extend the promise of meaningful and affordable health care to immigrant youth with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). These youth remain shutout from the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid, and CHIP because of regulatory restrictions that HHS can lift immediately.

2) Reforming Criminal Justice & Policing:

- The DOJ should strengthen its oversight of local police departments with the goal of eliminating racial profiling and bias-based policing. Local police department should be required to collect data about their practices (including stops, frisks, summons, use of force, arrests, and deaths) and evaluate and adopt

plans to rectify any racial disparities. The DOJ should fund – and, in appropriate cases, mandate the use of – training programs about implicit bias and de-escalation of police/civilian interactions.

- In order to eliminate the practice of jailing people for failure to pay court fines they can't afford, the DOJ should expand its grant making and technical support to help localities reform the ways court fines are assessed and enforced.
- Under its "excess property" program, the Pentagon has transferred \$4.2 billion in surplus military equipment to police departments and sheriffs' offices. Congress should prevent transfers of equipment inappropriate for local policing, end incentives to use equipment inappropriately, and require that recipients certify that they can account for all military weapons and equipment.
- The DOJ should use its spending and regulatory power to ensure that independent special prosecutors conduct investigations and make any prosecutorial decisions regarding all claims of officer misconduct and in all police encounters or custody that result in the death of a civilian. Localities should be given incentives and support for establishing civilian complaint review boards.
- Congress and the DOJ should expand resources to and coordination with local court systems for establishing and expanding alternative programs in order to reduce the number of people who are pulled into the jail and prison system. Services should include mental health, addiction services, trauma focused psychotherapy, housing and job assistance, and healthcare. Services should be provided within a restorative justice and harm reduction (not an abstinence-based or zero tolerance) paradigm.

3) LGBTQ Equality and Inclusion:

- Congress should pass the Equality Act to provide all LGBTQ people with comprehensive nondiscrimination protections. While localities have had some success advancing these bills, with the recent wave of state level anti-transgender bills across the country, it has become even clearer that the Federal Government must act to ensure that LGBTQ people in all states are uniformly protected from discrimination.
- The Administration should support federal, state, and local agencies in ensuring full, equal access for LGBT people and families to government-funded benefits and programs in areas such as health care, education, clean water, housing, nutrition support, environmental justice, employment, and cash assistance programs.
- Congress should pass the LGBT Data Inclusion Act to ensure that all LGBT people are counted and served. In order to better enforce nondiscrimination protections and provide appropriate and equitable services to LGBT people and their families, the government first needs to know more about LGBT communities and the issues they face. This act would require federal agencies to consider how they could collect data on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), but would let them tailor their data collection efforts to their agency's needs, since there are different best practices for collecting SOGI data in different settings.

Good Government that Serves the Public Interest

As local elected officials, it is our job to create trust between our communities and government through ensuring an accessible and representative democracy and promoting strategies to increase the transparency and participation in local government decision making.

1) Accessible and Representative Democracy:

- Congress should modernize the Voting Rights Act’s Section 5 preclearance formula to cover jurisdictions with a pattern of discrimination in order to prevent states and localities from enacting barriers to voting, ensuring that last minute changes won’t adversely affect voters, and protect voters from voting changes most likely to discriminate against people of color, and people whose primary language is not English.
- The federal government should mandate that all agencies currently required under federal or state law to provide opt-in registration under the NVRA (Motor Voter law) transition those agencies to a back-end opt-out automatic voter registration system where individuals interacting with those agencies will be automatically registered to vote using the information they are already providing to confirm eligibility and be offered an opportunity to opt-out by mail.
- Congress should set minimum national standards for early voting, including weekend and extended hours. The Federal Government should provide assistance in reducing the costs of improved voting technology, both through grants and improved grant-making processes, national standards, and improved coordination and technology updates.
- Congress should provide federal matching funds and technical assistance (including technology assistance) for localities that adopt public campaign finance systems with contribution, expenditure, and “pay-to-play” limits.
- Congress should enact a law ensuring that the rights of U.S. citizens to vote in any election for federal office shall not be denied or abridged because of a felony conviction, unless the individual is currently incarcerated in a correctional facility, setting a precedent for localities to adopt similar policies.

2) Transparency & Participation in Government:

- “Participatory budgeting” has grown enormously in the last 5 years, from just 1,000 voters in one ward in Chicago deciding on \$1 million, to over 70,000 people deciding on over \$50 million to support hundreds of community project. The next Administration should help grow this innovative practice of grassroots democracy by committing matching funds to local and regional governments that empower residents to decide public spending through participatory budgeting.
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Health and Human Services, and other federal departments should encourage participatory budgeting for federal grants and funds allocated to local community projects, and provide funding and staff support for local governments that implement participatory budgeting.
- Provide technology support for municipal “open data” portals that allow local governments to share their data online in the simplest ways that achieve broadly-accepted standards for usability.