Youth Activists’ Earth Day Demands

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QEW is one of 400 organizations that form the US Climate Strike Coalition. The Coalition is led by young people, through groups like Fridays for Future, International Indigenous Youth Council, Future Coalition, and Sunrise Movement. This Earth Day they organized three days of global online action and released the following demands for the US Congress and the next US President. Visit strikewithus.org for the full demands. As they say, “Together, we can change our world into one that is not only safe and sustainable, but flourishes for generations to come.”

The Demands

From congress and the next president, we demand a People’s Bailout, a Green New Deal, and Land Back for Indigenous Peoples.

1. A People’s Bailout. In the short term, we need a People’s Bailout prioritizing and funding those who have been hit first and worst by COVID-19 and the current recession including, but not limited to, Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and low-income communities. We demand that Congress immediately act as follows:

- Health is the top priority, for all people, with no exceptions. Healthcare is a human right, and Congress must treat it as such by providing free healthcare, paid sick leave, and proper equipment for all people, and by prioritizing those most marginalized such as low-wage workers, communities of color, people who are incarcerated, people who are housing insecure, undocumented people, and people with disabilities.

- Provide economic relief directly to the people. Provide individuals struggling to pay bills and buy food for their families with no less than 2,000 dollars monthly. Relieve student debt; stop water, electricity, broadband, and all other essential utility shut offs; increase food aid programs; broaden unemployment insurance; and expand childcare.

- Rescue workers and communities, not corporate executives. Reject corporate bailouts — including to the fossil fuel executives driving the climate emergency — and all giveaways that enrich wealthy executives and shareholders but leave workers behind. Instead, put money toward keeping workers on payroll, so they can stay inside and feed their families.

- Make a down payment on a regenerative economy, while preventing future crises. As we address the economic fallout of the pandemic, we must lay the groundwork for a just and sustainable energy economy. Stimulus legislation should create millions of good, family-sustaining jobs with high-road labor standards; counter systemic inequities by directing investments to the working families, communities of color, and Indigenous communities who face the most economic insecurity; and tackle the climate crisis that is compounding threats to our economy and health.

- Protect our democratic process while protecting each other. Ensure that every American can vote safely in primary and general elections by securing universal vote-by-mail, no-excuse absentee voting, online and same-day registration, and automatic voter registration. Fully fund and support the 2020 Census so that all people in this country can be counted.

2. A Green New Deal. Immediate relief is only the first step. With our communities and our futures on the line, we call on Congress and the next President to kickstart the era of the Green New Deal to transition our society and economy toward justice and sustainability:

- Enact a Green New Deal to transform our economy to 100% clean, renewable energy by 2030; create millions of good union jobs; rebuild infrastructure and affordable public transit; and phase out all fossil fuel extraction through a fair, just, and equitable transition protecting workers and communities.

- Ban fracking everywhere; halt all construction, leasing, and permitting for fossil fuel projects and
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other resource extraction, processing, and infrastructure; and reinstate the ban on crude oil exports. Ensure that impacted workers are provided with training, full wage replacement, relocation assistance, strong collective bargaining rights, early retirement options, and guaranteed pensions and benefits.

3. End all government subsidies for fossil fuels and require that banks, insurance companies, and asset managers — including pension funds and university endowments — stop funding, insuring, and investing in fossil fuel corporations that are fueling future climate and economic crises.

4. Protect and restore biodiversity. Declare both the global climate crisis and the extinction crisis as national emergencies. Ensure 30% of U.S. lands and waters are fully conserved and protected by 2030 and 50% by 2050; restore the Endangered Species Act to its full power; and invest in farmers and regenerative agriculture, including an end to subsidies for industrial agriculture.

5. Indigenous Land Back.

1. Return stolen sacred, ancestral Indigenous lands and lands that were unjustly taken through broken treaties.

2. Honor the treaties protecting Indigenous lands, waters, and sovereignty and protect all frontline communities affected most by extractive industries, COVID-19 and the climate crisis.

3. Prioritize an immediate end to all dirty resource extraction projects affecting or on indigenous lands.

4. Protect sacred ecosystems and the alignment of human law with natural law in defense of our environment and people.

5. Include the immutable rights of nature into the US constitution.

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