



PUBLIC CITIZEN 50

People • Power • Progress

YEARS



2023 Action Plan



PROTECTING, PRESERVING, ADVANCING DEMOCRACY

There's no point in sugar coating things: Although we dodged a bullet with the 2022 elections, the American democratic experiment is under assault.

The former president orchestrated a multi-faceted coup against the United States of America—and apparently wants to reclaim his former office.

A quasi-fascistic movement has grown across the country. It wants to make it harder for people of color to vote, it has an ideological commitment to sabotaging elections, and it is willing to threaten the use of violence.

More than 20 states have enacted laws in the last two years that change election laws to give more power to legislatures or partisan entities and strip power and election duties from secretaries of state.

Election deniers—people who deny the result of the 2020 election and are committed

to imposing their preferred candidates irrespective of actual vote counts—have won key state and federal offices.

And, behind all this—an affront to the basic notion of one person, one vote—is the corrupting influence of Big Money: A mere 100 individuals are responsible for 70 percent of all Super PAC contributions!

There's nothing more important for the fate of our country than rallying to protect, preserve and advance our democracy.

We're going to do everything in our power to do exactly that.

Four years ago, we pulled together what has now become the major, nationwide pro-democracy coalition.

I don't have enough time to list for you all the town halls, rallies, creative actions, petitions, emails, letters and telephone calls to members of Congress and government officials, letters to the editor, lobby meetings and much, much more that we have done in the last several years to advance democracy.

But I can guarantee you this: We're going to ratchet things up.



Here's an overview of what we're planning:

- Demand January 6 accountability and the prosecution of former President Donald Trump. We'll be holding nationwide rallies on the anniversary of the insurrection to push for accountability.
- Win resolutions and ordinances in cities, towns and counties across the nation protecting the right to vote and implementing strong legal protections for election workers against threats and intimidation.
- In the lame duck session of Congress, win passage of the Electoral Count Reform Act, to close a loophole that Trumpists have cited to justify election sabotage.
- Working with in-state allies, continue our intensive organizing in key states, including Michigan, Arizona, Wisconsin and others, to block legislation and other maneuvers that undermine election integrity.
- Lobby and organize for the transformative For the People Act, putting every Member of Congress on the record as for or against democracy.
- Advocate with the Biden administration for an executive order forcing corporations that receive government contracts to disclose their political spending.
- Build out our student engagement program, with dozens of students reaching out to thousands to vote, and vote for democracy.
- Mobilize. Mobilize. Mobilize.

Fascists depend on fear, intimidation, isolation and people hiding.

We're going to respond with love, togetherness, public visibility and a relentless public defense of our democracy.

ADVANCING A PROGRESSIVE POPULIST AGENDA

Far too many people in our country feel left out and left behind. They think the system—politics and the economy—is rigged. And they are not wrong.

Some of them have been lured by fake populists. Some have given up on politics. A great many of them are frustrated and despairing.

To speak to this despair, we need to present an aggressive, progressive populist appeal.

We are going to use all of our advocacy tools to advance—and



to encourage the Biden administration to embrace—an agenda that speaks directly to the problem of corporate power.

Here's what that means:

- **Drug Pricing:** Facing down Big Pharma and its inhumane profiteering. Yes, we need far-reaching legislative action. But the administration also has tools it should use now to tackle medicine monopolies.
- **Big Money in Politics:** Confronting Big Money dominance of our election, starting by ending secret spending. The DISCLOSE Act would outlaw Dark Money. On its own, the administration could force large corporations that contract with the

government to disclose their political spending.

- **Big Oil Profiteering:** Ending Big Oil's rip-offs by imposing a windfall profits tax on the industry.
- **Make Corporations Pay:** Taxing corporations and the rich. The Inflation Reduction Act was a positive step, but we are far from a fair tax system. Everyone knows it, and it breeds disgust.
- **Defend and expand Social Security and Medicare:** Republicans have announced they want to use their leverage in Congress to cut these vital programs.

Each of these issues requires its own campaign plan, and we have that.

When it comes to Big Money in Politics, for example, not only have we led the charge for a Constitutional amendment to overturn *Citizens United*, we are pursuing a nuanced inside-outside strategy to push the Biden administration to issue an executive order requiring government contractors to disclose their political spending.

We've scoured government contracting databases to show how such a policy would cover at least half of Fortune 100 companies. We've done the legal analysis to show the White House has authority to act. We've collected hundreds of thousands of petitions and drummed up support on social media. Now, we're going to ratchet up pressure further, lobbying inside the White House and mobilizing the public to demand action.

But as important as our individual plans are, the combined message of these measures is even more critical: We have to shift power from corporations to people.

We have to do these things because they will improve people's living conditions and make the country more fair and just.



And we have to do these things to preserve our democracy, to pull people away from the fake populist authoritarian movement that threatens democracy itself.



ENSURING QUALITY AND AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE

From our founding 50 years ago, we have always held this to be true: Everyone has the right to quality and affordable health care.

One of the great stains on our country is that we have failed to uphold that right—and, I'm afraid, the failure is growing worse.

- Two-thirds of personal bankruptcies are due to medical bills—and in the vast majority of those cases, people had insurance. It just wasn't good enough.
- Nearly a third of Americans say they ration their drugs because they are too expensive—and nearly one in five people who need insulin, as a recent Public Citizen study showed.
- Health care providers are consolidating, raising prices and closing hospitals. And greedy private equity firms are gobbling up nursing homes, hospice services and emergency room practices, cutting care and charging astronomical prices.

- On top of which, Republicans aim to leverage their Congressional power to demand cuts to Medicare.

So, here's what we're doing –

Defend Medicare: With allies, we're preparing to mobilize Americans across the country to defend Medicare. No way do we let politicians cut this lifeline for seniors.

Improve Medicare: We know, too, that Medicare is not what it should be. We've submitted detailed proposals and are lobbying the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services to clamp down on Medicare privatization and the insurance companies that are denying care and ripping off taxpayers—to the tune of \$600 billion over the next decade.

Stop Corporatization: Our recent report on private equity takeover of nursing homes prompted the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services to adopt reforms. We have more breaking news reports coming with policy demands to slow these predators from further weakening our health care system.

Block Industry Consolidation: We have urged federal regulators to block Amazon's entry into the health care market. In 2023, we will call on regulators to impose a moratorium on insurance and health care provider mergers, on the grounds that they are motivated in large part to manipulate billing to rip off Medicare.

Lower Drug Prices: We won an important victory with the Inflation Reduction Act, but there's much more to be done. We have petitioned the Biden administration to end drug company monopolist price gouging. In many cases, the government has authority under existing law to authorize generic competition for medicines—even while they are covered by patents. Using this authority even once would force Big Pharma to slash prices.



Ensure Drug Safety: Our team of doctors and medical researchers reviews clinical trial data to see what's safe and what works. We make that information directly available to tens of thousands of people through our publications and websites. And when we find problems, we demand the government act, testifying, petitioning and suing to keep or get dangerous drugs off the market.

Build the Movement for Medicare for All: At the end of the day, the only way to cover everyone and control skyrocketing costs is with Medicare for All. We're supercharging the movement for Medicare for All—and have now won more than 100 local resolutions calling for Medicare for All.

In truth, this is only a partial overview of our health care advocacy. But you get the idea!





MITIGATING THE CLIMATE CATASTROPHE

UN Secretary General António Guterres says “We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator.”

“Greenhouse gas emissions keep growing, global temperatures keep rising, and our planet is fast approaching tipping points that will make climate chaos irreversible.”

It’s too late to stop climate change, but whether it’s a severe but manageable disruption or civilization-threatening process is up to us.

The decisions we make now will impact humanity’s future for centuries or perhaps all time.

And, so far, we’re not making good decisions.

Super-accelerating away from fossil fuels and to the transition to clean energy requires multiple strategies.

Along with our advocacy for major governmental investments in renewables and strong national standards, we are carving out a role in the climate/finance space.

What does that mean? Two things. First, we are leading the effort to hold financial institutions accountable for their role in financing climate-destroying activities. Second, we are pushing financial regulators to infuse climate risk into their analysis of the issues facing banks and financial institutions.

Our underlying theory is: Follow the money.

If carbon polluters can't get financing, they can't undertake new projects.

Along with public pressure, the key to make this approach stick is to explain how climate is in fact a financial risk factor.

New investments in pipelines, natural gas or oil drilling do not make sense, because the world is going to shift away from dirty energy.

Investments now are much riskier as a business proposition than the markets are recognizing.



We are running a focused campaign targeting the insurer AIG and pushing a broad agenda with financial regulators. We are optimistic that the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) will soon require publicly traded companies to disclose their climate risk, which we think will prompt meaningful changes in investment strategies.

Going forward, our work plan includes:

- Pushing for nomination of financial regulators who favor addressing the climate crisis;
- Working with and pressuring financial regulators to undertake action;
- Publishing detailed, expert commentary—in the form of comment letters and otherwise—that explicate how to implement climate commitments at agencies such as the SEC (e.g., what should companies be required to disclose about climate pollution, what units of measurement should they use and what third parties if any should verify their claims) and Commodities Futures Trading Commission (CFTC);

- Pushing the Federal Reserve, Treasury Department and other agencies to start including climate as a factor in their prudential regulation (it's working, they are!);
- Working with state insurance regulators to impose climate targets on insurers, following the breakthrough approach we helped win in Connecticut; and
- Building on our success against AIG, targeting other insurers and financiers of fossil fuel projects, with the aim of winning measurable commitments from them to reverse their practices.

That's only part of what we're doing! We have a lot more going on: We're driving climate action plans in all of Texas's major cities. We're advocating for major federal investments in clean energy. We're pushing for stronger vehicle fuel efficiency, including in a major lawsuit. We've led the way for a workplace safety rule to protect workers—especially immigrant farm workers—from deadly heat exposure. We're pushing to end oil leasing on federal lands. We're pushing for innovative systems of public participation at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission that would empower tribes and affected communities to push back against natural gas development schemes. And we're spearheading a campaign to demand Toyota transition to all-electric vehicles.

There's not going to be any single win that solves climate change. It's going to take years of work, building awareness and public demand for action. We're going to have to pile up victories—and then use the momentum to make even more advances. The effort to decarbonize the planet is going to reach every nook and cranny of the global economy.

For Public Citizen, as always, we're driven by one question: where can we make a strategic difference?

The climate/finance area reflects that: We can capitalize on our expertise. We're confident we can impact policymakers (and we're already seeing that). And we believe this strategic intervention will have broad ripple effects throughout the economy.

With your help, we're going to lean in even more on the climate fight, call on our strategic savvy, and make a real difference.



ADDITIONAL AREAS OF FOCUS

As enormous as these campaigns are, they represent only a portion of what we're doing. Other key priorities include:

- **Taking on Big Tech.** We played a key supporting role in drafting far-reaching anti-monopoly legislation that has passed the House Judiciary Committee and has bipartisan support. We're helping lead the charge for the Federal Trade Commission to issue rules to protect online privacy and end the pervasive corporate surveillance of what we do on the internet.
- **Litigating for corporate accountability.** We're winning cases in the federal appeals courts to uphold the liability of nursing homes and meat packing facilities that recklessly exposed patients and workers to the coronavirus. We're fighting efforts in courts by freight shipping companies to escape liability for truck crashes, drug companies to avoid paying damages inflicted by unsafe drugs, and chemical companies to evade accountability for hazards they create.
- **Ending Congressional stock trading.** In 2012, we won passage of the STOCK Act, which made Congressional insider trading illegal and forced disclosure of Congressional stock trading. The law was a good first step and has worked. But we need more: a straightforward ban on Congressional stock trading (with exceptions for true blind trusts). We're leading the lobbying charge and we're close to winning.
- **Demanding corporate criminal enforcement.** Our reports have documented a steady decline in criminal enforcement, hitting at an all-time low last year. We have aggressively criticized the use of leniency agreements for corporate criminals—agreements not to prosecute if corporations promise not to break the



law in the future. We are pushing the Biden administration's Department of Justice to get tougher—and they have promised to do so. We're happy with the rhetoric, but want to see the results.

- Reallocating spending away from the Pentagon to meet urgent domestic needs. The Pentagon budget is fast racing to \$1 trillion annually—more than the next nine countries spend, combined. We're taking on the military-industrial complex and building a movement to curb Pentagon spending and reallocate funds.



PARTNERING WITH YOU

This is a rare moment in American history, with unparalleled threats to democratic functioning.

We're always eyes wide open about the real threats facing the nation and world—and the challenges now are as great as they've been in generations. And we surely understand the power of those who oppose progress.

But we're also relentlessly optimistic.

We know we can accomplish great things, because that's exactly what we've done for 50 years.

All along the way, that's been a partnership.

You power our work.

2023 Action Plan BUDGET

LINE ITEM	AMOUNT
Personnel	
Leadership	\$213,180
Communications and Online	176,583
Campaign Director and Coordinator(s)	208,252
Regulations and Policy Team	305,503
Attorneys	196,229
Advocate Team	176,583
Researchers	152,752
Fringe Benefits (28% of Salaries)	400,247
Personnel Subtotal	\$1,829,329
Direct Costs	
Meetings and Events	134,659
Publications, Polling and Communications Costs	827,172
Miscellaneous	97,744
Direct Costs Subtotal	\$1,059,575
Overhead	
General and Administrative (15% of Personnel)	274,399
Overhead Subtotal	\$274,399

GRAND TOTAL	\$3,163,303
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