



TEMPERATURE CHECK

PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS ACTION FUND

THE PROGRESSIVE VISION VS. TRUMP'S LIES

Trump said: "Our agenda is relentlessly pro-worker, pro-family, pro-growth, and, most of all, pro-American."

This administration rips off families every chance it gets—gutting worker protections, trying to strip away healthcare from millions, and tearing families apart—all while giving giant tax breaks to the rich. We need leaders who recognize that the strength of our nation should be judged not by stock market gains or CEO pay, but by whether every single one of us has a chance to achieve the American Dream. By that basic measure, this presidency has been a disaster for all but the wealthiest. Fortunately, members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus and activists all across the country are fighting for a bold new vision for America. A vision that puts people over profits and builds bridges instead of walls.

-Liz Watson, Executive Director, Progressive Caucus Action Fund

Trump said: "The State of our Union is stronger than ever before!"

Contrary to Trump's litany of falsehoods, after three years under his presidency, the state of the union is shattered. His actions have emboldened white supremacists, misogynists, climate deniers, and dictators. His policies have made the rich richer, while almost half of our population still lives paycheck to paycheck. And yet the state of the progressive movement is strong. Working with allies in Congress, activists are inspiring hope by advancing the boldest agenda for health, education, sustainability, peace, and racial, gender and economic justice since the civil rights and Great Society reforms of the 1960s.

-John Cavanagh, Director, Institute for Policy Studies

Trump said: "...we are building the world's most prosperous and inclusive society — one where every citizen can join in America's unparalleled success, and where every community can take part in America's extraordinary rise."

Trump is going to run his re-election campaign on the claim that the economy is great. The truth is that the American economy is not great. Unchecked corporate power is the biggest threat to the American economy and our democracy, and regressive policy choices made by Trump, including tax cuts for billion-dollar corporations, allow those with the most income and capital to accumulate more wealth and power—which they use to further skew policymaking in their own favor. From corruption scandals within Trump's Department of Education to a painfully idle plan to address the climate crisis, this administration consistently puts the interests of industry insiders before the health of our nation. In order to restore the integrity of American democracy, we must be explicit about the need for anti-corruption reforms and commit to reducing conflicts



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of interest—among legislators and regulators—through new rules that curb the influence of money in politics *and* policymaking.

-Felicia Wong, President and CEO, Roosevelt Forward

Trump said: “With every action, my administration is restoring the rule of law and re-asserting the culture of American freedom.”

Trump had an opportunity tonight to end his assault on our freedoms and his fear-mongering, and pledge to put the needs of all people in America ahead of his own. But sadly, his track record does not make us optimistic. While Trump aggressively charges on with his agenda, he continues to shred the very fabric of our civil and human rights. We the People will not stand idly by and watch as our hard-earned rights are dismantled. The power of our coalition remains strong, and today we recommit to continuing the crucial work of moving towards a more perfect union, today and every day.

-Vanita Gupta, President and CEO, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

ON TAXES, JOBS, AND THE ECONOMY:

Trump said: “Since my election, we have created 7 million new jobs.”

While job growth seems healthy, wage growth continues to slow. By sector, the strongest growth continues to be in the lowest-paying industries. Manufacturing jobs, once a bulwark of the postwar middle class, now pay less on average than private-sector jobs overall.

-Dean Baker, Senior Economist, Center on Economic and Policy Research

Trump said: “The unemployment rates for African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, and Asian-Americans have reached the lowest levels in history. African-American youth unemployment has reached an all-time low.”

The reality is that unemployment for Black people fell 4.2 percentage points in the last three years of the Obama administration compared to 1.6 percentage points in the first three years of the Trump administration. In other words, the drop in unemployment, like so many other elements of the so-called ‘great American comeback,’ is a continuation of trends that began before President Trump took office.

-Alan Barber, Policy Director, Progressive Caucus Action Fund



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Trump said: “If we had not reversed the failed economic policies of the previous administration, the world would not now be witness to America’s great economic success.”

Are we witnessing a ‘great economic success’ when corporate profits and CEO pay have far outpaced wage growth in the US; when inequality is a central fact of American society; and when too many of us — especially Black and brown Americans — are just one emergency away from financial collapse? Corporate profits are not the economy. Shareholder wealth is not the economy. True economic health can only be measured by the health and well-being of America’s workers, families, and communities—all of which are hurt by a Trump economy that prioritizes tax cuts for the rich.

-Felicia Wong, President and CEO, Roosevelt Forward

Trump said: “...our great Republican tax cuts.”

It appears Trump’s glancing reference of his tax cuts during the SOTU address means he didn’t have much good to say about them. Neither do most Americans based on public polling, unless you’re rich or a corporate CEO.

-Frank Clemente, Americans for Tax Fairness, Executive Director

Trump said: “Since my election, United States stock markets have soared 70 percent.”

Donald Trump touts a growing stock market, but only half of Americans have any exposure to the stock market, and over 84% of all stock is held by the top 10%. He touts economic growth, but is silent on the record levels of student debt, record costs of college and childcare, and a federal minimum wage that hasn’t increased since 2009. His misguided tax cut only served to expand a wealth gap in which Black and Brown families have \$1 for every \$10 in white wealth.

-Mark Huelsman, Associate Director, Policy & Research, Demos

President Trump claimed that his policies have been good for the economy by pointing to high stock prices, but the real measure of an economy is if it’s working well for all people, not just the wealthy and well-connected. Things are still pretty dicey for working people and calling it a boom will come as a real surprise to the many who are struggling. We need economic policies that shift power into the hands of the workers and families who make up the economy, but what we heard from President Trump last night isn’t going to get us there.

-Michael Linden, Executive Director, Groundwork Collaborative



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Trump said: “Jobs and investment are pouring into 9,000 previously-neglected neighborhoods thanks to Opportunity Zones.”

Opportunity Zones are more tax breaks for the wealthy. Programs to foster economic development must do better in engaging the communities that need economic development the most, and they must ensure that existing community members are designers and beneficiaries of that development.

- Lily Roberts, Director of Economic Mobility, Center for American Progress

ON POVERTY AND WORKING FAMILIES:

Trump said: “This is a blue collar boom.”

Here’s one thing Trump isn’t telling us: American families are taking on rising levels of consumer debt, struggling to keep up with escalating costs for health care, housing, and higher education. Yet not only is Trump failing to address families’ fundamental needs, his administration is actively weakening fair lending rules, opening the door to predatory loans in states that have reined them in, and denying access to the courts for people that get ripped off by banks and credit card companies.

-Amy Traub, Associate Director, Policy & Research, Demos

Trump said he’s the president for the working class last night but his record tells a different story. He cannot take credit for the low unemployment rate — that is simply the continuation of a positive trend that began 10 years ago, long before he took office. Trump can, however, take credit for the policies he has put in place, policies that will hurt working families for years to come. He’s rolled back overtime protections and workplace safety protections, he’s weakened protections that keep franchise employees from being cheated out of their earnings, he’s made it harder for workers to join together to improve their wages and working conditions, and on and on. His NLRB has issued countless anti-worker decisions that strip workers of their right to organize and give more power to corporations to interfere with workers’ rights. President Trump claims to stand for workers but at every turn he has prioritized the interest of corporate executives over those of the working people of this country.

-Heidi Shierholz, Senior Economist and Director of Policy, Economic Policy Institute

Trump said: “Under my administration, 7 million Americans have come off of food stamps, and 10 million people have been lifted off of welfare.”

People are losing their food stamp access because this administration keeps coming up with new ways to restrict access to SNAP, not because they’re thriving in the economy. Changing



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how you measure poverty and gutting basic supports aren't the same as reducing poverty – they're just sweeping poverty under the rug.

- Lily Roberts, Director of Economic Mobility, Center for American Progress

Trump said: "...poverty is plummeting..."

Between 2017 and 2018, the most recent year we have data for, it barely budged, falling from 13 percent to 12.8 percent. Looking ahead, President Trump's regulatory war on SNAP and other economic security programs will only heighten economic insecurity.

-Shawn Fremstad, Senior Policy Fellow, Center on Economic and Policy Research

Trump said: "Now, I call on the Congress to pass the bipartisan Advancing Support for Working Families Act, extending family leave to mothers and fathers all across the Nation."

President Trump called on Congress to pass paid family leave by championing the Advancing Support for Working Families Act. This proposal is not paid family and medical leave –it is essentially a payday loan. It offers a loan to new parents, which would have to be repaid over 10 to 15 years through reductions to their Child Tax Credit—a critical cash support for families working in low-wage jobs. This repayment would place a significant burden on parents in low-wage jobs, especially parents of color, who already contend with serious economic struggles in what is a formative time for their children's development.

-Pronita Gupta, Director, Job Quality, Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

Trump said: "I've also overseen historic funding increases for high-quality child care, enabling 17 states to help more children, many of which have reduced or eliminated their wait lists altogether. I set Congress a plan to expand access to high-quality child care and urge you to act immediately."

Trump's so-called child care "plan" is no such thing. In fact, his budgets have consistently proposed flat funding or cuts for child care and early learning programs, instead of the federal investments we need. His budget included a dangerous proposal that would roll back basic health and safety protections for kids. We're still waiting for a real plan that provides what families and educators tell us they need and want — affordable, high-quality child care for all.

-Catherine White, Director of Child Care and Early Learning, National Women's Law Center



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Trump said: “After decades of flat and falling incomes, wages are rising fast — and, wonderfully, they are rising fastest for low-income workers.”

Much of the increase that the President touted comes from states that have raised their minimum wage, having lost patience while waiting since 2009 for Congress to raise the federal minimum wage.

-Lily Roberts, Director of Economic Mobility, Center for American Progress

ON HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL SECURITY:

Trump said: “Before I took office, health insurance premiums had more than doubled in just 5 years. I moved quickly to provide affordable alternatives.”

The reality is that these junk plans have no requirements to include basic protections, such as preventing exclusions for preexisting conditions or to include essential health benefits, such as maternity care, mental health services, and prescription drug coverage.

-Eagan Kemp, Health Care Policy Advocate, Public Citizen

Trump said: “I was pleased to announce last year that, for the first time in 51 years, the cost of prescription drugs actually went down.”

Trump’s claim that drug prices went down is just another [alternative fact](#). If he was serious about [getting tough on Big Pharma](#), he would “negotiate like crazy,” enthusiastically support other legislation to rein in industry and challenge monopolies, which would lower costs dramatically for patients.

-Steven Knievel, Access to Medicines Advocate, Public Citizen

Trump said: “We will always protect your Medicare and your Social Security.”

Trump has proposed to [cut](#) nearly \$3 billion over ten years in Social Security benefits for Americans living with disabilities, from stage 4 cancer to Down Syndrome and other serious and even fatal conditions. He is proposing to require physically and mentally ill people with disabilities to reprove their disability every two years through a morass of bureaucracy and paperwork. Further, in an [interview](#) in January, he said that cutting Medicare and further cuts to Social Security will be on his agenda in his second term, “when the time comes.” That’s not protection, that’s a gut job.



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-Karen Dolan, Fellow, Institute for Policy Studies

Trump said: “As we work to improve Americans’ healthcare, there are those who want to take away your healthcare, take away your doctor, and abolish private insurance entirely.”

It is impossible to pretend that Americans are happy with their private insurance when [1 in 3 Americans](#) have put off medical treatment in the past year due to cost, including 1 in 4 who put off treatment for a serious condition. In addition, more than [13 percent](#) of Americans report knowing at least one friend or family member who died in the last 5 years after not being able to afford needed medical treatment. If President Trump actually wants to ensure access to health care, it is time to pass Medicare for All, which would guarantee that everyone in America could get the care they need when they need it without facing medical debt and bankruptcy.

-Eagan Kemp, Health Care Policy Advocate, Public Citizen

ON REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS:

Trump said: “That is also why I am calling upon the Members of Congress here tonight to pass legislation finally banning the late-term abortion of babies.”

How dare President Trump and his extreme cronies think they know better than women and their doctors when it comes to their own decisions and lives in these situations. They keep playing political football with people’s painful stories to advance their extreme – and unpopular – effort to overturn the constitutional right to abortion. The reality is that pregnant people need access to comprehensive quality affordable reproductive health care, including abortion. We refuse to take any cue on these personal health care decisions from Trump or his administration. Period.

-Leila Abolfazli, Director of Federal Reproductive Rights, National Women’s Law Center

It’s no surprise that Trump attacked families facing incredibly difficult, complicated, and personal medical decisions. He once again pulled a trick straight out of the anti-choice playbook — spreading harmful and inflammatory disinformation and demonizing women and families in order to distract from his ultimate agenda of banning abortion outright with no exceptions. This extreme agenda stands in stark contrast to the vast majority of Americans — seven in 10 — who agree that there’s no reason for politicians to interfere in personal decisions about pregnancy.

-Kristin Ford, National Communications Director, NARAL Pro-Choice America



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The same politicians pushing restrictions on health care that force people to delay their abortions are also shaming people for seeking abortion later in pregnancy. The fact is, people struggling to make ends meet bear the brunt of restrictions on abortion later in pregnancy. Every time someone seeking abortion care finally has the money to pay out of pocket for their procedure, another week has gone by, and the cost increases. This is the cruel cycle low-income people face when seeking abortion care.

-Kelsey Ryland, Director of Federal Strategies, All Above All*

The state of our union in 2020 is clear — our rights and freedoms are on the line. Donald Trump and his administration are doing everything in their power to limit access to health care and abortion, and to control our bodies. Their policies have systematically worked to deny sexual and reproductive health care to and violate the rights of immigrants, people of color, and LGBTQ people across the country. His tokenizing of guests of color is particularly cruel in this context. In January alone, the Trump-Pence administration has attacked health care from all directions because they know the clock is ticking — voters are not on their side, and come November, time is up. The American people want elected officials who will expand their access to health care, not take it away, and we are grateful that Governor Whitmer and Congresswoman Escobar both addressed the urgent need to protect our health care in their speeches tonight. Our union is stronger when everyone can control their health, their rights, and their future.

-Alexis McGill Johnson, Acting President & CEO, Planned Parenthood Action Fund

ON IMMIGRATION AND CIVIL RIGHTS:

Trump said: “Last year, our brave ICE officers arrested more than 120,000 criminal aliens charged with nearly 10,000 burglaries, 5,000 sexual assaults, 45,000 violent assaults, and 2,000 murders.”

Last night, Trump made it clear again that his anti-immigrant agenda is about promoting discrimination and fear in an attempt to divide us based on the color of our skin and where we are from. We saw the results of his hateful and dangerous white supremacist rhetoric with the shooting in El Paso. The only way to fight Trump is to come together as a progressive movement and lead with our humanity; by pushing for immigration policies that help people without hurting people and that give people the freedom to move and to stay.

-Bruna Sollod, Communications Director, United We Dream

Today’s glorification of predatory agencies like ICE and CBP reinforced that our collective freedom to live in peace and in union is under attack. We must stand up against the racist



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anti-immigrant policies that continue to perpetuate the criminalization of immigrants and protect our collective freedom to move.

-Josue De Luna Navarro, New Mexico Fellow, Institute for Policy Studies

Trump said: “We are working on legislation to replace our outdated and randomized immigration system with one based on merit, welcoming those who follow the rules, contribute to our economy, support themselves financially, and uphold our values.”

Donald Trump continues to vilify immigrants. He made it clear during his speech that he wants to implement an immigration system that limits the number of black and brown people into the U.S. This is evident in his implementation of the Muslim Ban, and current child separation policies at the Southern Border.

-Abed Ayoub, National Legal & Policy Director, ADC

Trump said: “My administration is also defending religious liberty, and that includes the Constitutional right to pray in public schools.”

Trump’s speech employed the same tactics as his policies when it comes to LGBTQ Americans. Erasure and misusing religious freedom as a weapon to undermine LGBTQ equality. He has spent his presidency dismantling protections for LGBTQ people in health care, employment, schools, and critical services like shelters and given lifetime appointments to a slate of anti-equality judges. The government should uphold the rights of all Americans, yet Trump once again demonstrated he is only concerned with the rights of a few.

-Sharita Gruberg, Policy Director, LGBT Research and Communications Project, Center for American Progress

ON CLIMATE AND THE ENVIRONMENT:

Trump said: “Thanks to our bold regulatory reduction campaign, the United States has become the number one producer of oil and natural gas in the world, by far.”

Short term thinking leads to long term catastrophes — the low cost of gas and oil results in a high price for Black, Brown, Indigenous and poor white communities. At a time when science tells us to keep it in the ground, Trump is betting on fossil fuels and against our mutual future.

- Anthony Rogers-Wright, Climate Justice Alliance



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Trump said: “From the instant I took office, I moved rapidly to revive the United States economy — slashing a record number of job-killing regulations.”

The real life consequence of cutting our public protections is the loss of the safeguards that help the American people — rules that protect our air, water, financial system, children’s health, workers and more.

-Lisa Gilbert, Vice President, Public Citizen

ON VOTING, DEMOCRACY AND CORRUPTION:

It is appalling that Donald Trump dared to say that his administration “is restoring the rule of law,” when in reality he is breaking constitutional norms with every breath, and with every abuse of his power showing his clear belief that he is above the law itself.

-Lisa Gilbert, Vice President Public Citizen

Donald Trump demonstrated an unusual level of self-awareness in his interesting decision to avoid identifying a single civilian appointee of his by name in the entirety of his lengthy remarks. Trump’s destructive corruption is much broader and more consequential than merely his corrupt acts to line his own pockets -- across the breadth of the executive branch, Trump has sold the interests of the American people out to the highest bidder. History will judge the depth and pervasiveness of the Trump team’s corruption as a critical component of his legacy.

-Jeff Hauser, Executive Director, Revolving Door Project, Center for Economic and Policy Research

Trump said: “We are supporting the hopes of Cubans, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans to restore democracy.”

Trump bragged about democracy building abroad, but he was notably silent on the many ways we still do not have a true democracy here at home. Democracy at the founding of the United States was of, by, and for wealthy, white men. Centuries of struggle and sacrifice led by black and brown Americans has brought us closer to a true democracy, but still today communities of color have a harder time getting and staying registered to vote and face more barriers to the ballot box. Our democracy is strongest when all people are able to participate, but this administration is doing everything it can to suppress voting rights and subvert the multi-racial, inclusive democracy we know is possible.



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- Laura Williamson, Senior Policy Analyst, Demos

Trump said: “My administration is also strongly defending our national security and combating radical Islamic terrorism.”

Donald Trump’s comments that our national security is the best it has ever been, is particularly rich in the wake of withholding needed military aid to a democratic ally for personal political gain — and getting impeached for it.

-Lisa Gilbert, Vice President, Public Citizen

ON TRADE:

Trump said: “One of the single biggest promises I made to the American people was to replace the disastrous NAFTA trade deal.”

Trump’s NAFTA 2.0 deal is also a disaster — [for our climate](#) and the health of our communities. [Rife with giveaways to corporate polluters](#), Trump’s trade deal will help corporations export more pollution and jobs to Mexico, weaken climate policies, and extract more fossil fuels. The consequences are very real for communities across North America — more [dumping of lead pollution](#) in border communities, more [arsenic-laced rivers](#) in Mexico, more [tar sands oil devastation](#) in Canada, and more climate disruption for all of us as [corporations move their emissions from one country to another](#).

-Ben Beachy, Director, Living Economy Program, Sierra Club

Although President Trump is trying to take a victory lap on his USMCA trade deal, his broken promises and irresponsible trade war have hurt the very workers and families he promised to help. This latest deal doesn't do nearly enough to create American jobs, increase workers’ wages, or protect workers and the environment. We need a trade agenda that focuses on everyday people, not more corporate handouts that we know never actually 'trickle down' to the rest of us.

-Sapna Mehta, Director of Policy and Research, Groundwork Collaborative

Trump said: “[USMCA] will also bring trade with Mexico and Canada to a much higher degree, but also to a much greater level of fairness and reciprocity.”



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Congressional Democrats forced Trump to include some serious language on labor rights in Mexico. While it remains to be seen how enforceable these will be, they are definitely stronger than the provisions in the original NAFTA.

-Dean Baker, Senior Economist, Center on Economic and Policy Research

Trump said: “Days ago, we signed the groundbreaking new agreement with China that will defend our workers, protect our intellectual property, bring billions of dollars into our treasury, and open vast new markets for products made and grown right here in the United States of America.”

The China agreement largely reflects changes China already made that will incentivize more job outsourcing by providing more access for foreign investors and protections for their intellectual property. It promises a one-time increased purchases of \$50 billion in energy supplies, \$35 billion in services, \$32 billion in agricultural goods and \$80 billion in manufactured goods that are unlikely to occur.

-Lori Wallach, Director, Global Trade Watch, Public Citizen

ON EDUCATION:

Trump said: “Pass the Education Freedom Scholarships and Opportunity Act — because no parent should be forced to send their child to a failing government school.”

Vouchers and choice work as a distraction from the important questions of making sure that every child has a safe, nurturing school where they can thrive. Paying for a paltry few kids to get vouchers increases segregation and takes money out of the pockets of schools that serve ALL our children.

-Emma Garcia, Economist, Economic Policy Institute

Trump said: “My administration is determined to give our citizens the opportunities they need regardless of age or background.”

Donald Trump didn't say a word about the \$1.6 trillion in student loan debt crippling a generation of Americans. His administration has done nothing to reduce the skyrocketing price of higher education, done nothing to invest in public 2- and 4-year colleges, and done nothing to reduce the burden of debt that reaches deep into communities of color. In fact, by slashing and repealing rules that shielded students from low-value for-profit colleges and kept those programs from receiving taxpayer dollars, Donald Trump and Betsy DeVos have only exposed



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students to predatory programs and increased the risk of financial ruin for families just looking to follow their dreams.

-Mark Huelsman, Associate Director, Policy & Research, Demos

ON MILITARISM AND FOREIGN POLICY:

Trump said: “Last week, I announced a groundbreaking plan for peace between Israel and the Palestinians.”

This so-called “deal of the century” has nothing to do with peace in Palestine-Israel -- this is the meeting of the Impeached and the Indicted — it’s designed to keep Trump in the White House and Netanyahu out of jail — and both of them re-elected.

-Phyllis Bennis, Program Director, New Internationalism, Institute for Policy Studies

Trump said: “We have purchased the finest planes, missiles, rockets, ships, and every other form of military equipment.”

Those purchases enrich a wealthy and powerful few, and come at a high cost to taxpayers. With corporate contractors devouring half of the Pentagon budget, there are only crumbs left for decent housing or livable wages for military families. Critical priorities like homeless programs and medical research are funded at [pennies on the dollar](#) compared to what Pentagon contractors pull in.

-Lindsay Koshgarian, Program Director, National Priorities Project, Institute for Policy Studies

Trump said: “As we defend American lives, we are working to end America’s wars in the Middle East.”

In recent months, Trump deployed thousands of troops to the region, adding to the thousands who were already stationed there. Over the past two years, he has escalated the air wars in Somalia and Afghanistan. Having surrounded Iran with ground troops and naval forces, and increased devastating sanctions, he has repeatedly come close to starting military confrontation with the country. The wars must end, but Trump is doing the opposite.

-Khury Petersen-Smith, Michael Ratner Middle East Fellow, Institute for Policy Studies

Trump said: “All Americans are united with the Venezuelan people in their righteous struggle for freedom!”



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Crippling economic sanctions do not bring freedom. US sanctions are killing — literally — Venezuelans unable to get medicine and more. What's needed is diplomacy — sanctions are not a replacement for war; they are a weapon of war aimed at civilians.

-Phyllis Bennis, Program Director, New Internationalism, Institute for Policy Studies

Trump said: "To safeguard American Liberty, we have invested a record-breaking \$2.2 trillion in the United States military."

Militarism is an agent of climate change: the US military machine is one of the biggest polluters in the world. Two trillion dollars of the people's money must be divested from funding bellicose, imperial adventures that exacerbate the crisis, and reinvested in commencing a regenerative economy that leaves no one behind.

-Anthony Rogers-Wright, Policy Coordinator, Climate Justice Alliance

Trump said: "Last month, at my direction, the United States Military executed a flawless precision strike that killed Soleimani and terminated his evil reign of terror forever."

This round of escalation and military danger began with Trump's pull-out from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018. This was not an imminent threat, it was an assassination of General Soleimani, a political as well as military leader, and it was illegal under both U.S. and international law. Only Congress — not the president — has the right to take the United States to war. And this was an act of war — that put us all at risk of a regional, potentially even global, conflagration.

-Phyllis Bennis, Program Director, New Internationalism, Institute for Policy Studies