

# Progressives Urge Obama to Consider Basic Income

by [riseupeconomics](#)

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As our economy continues to implode and the banks, big corporations, and insurance companies keep coming back for billions more in federal bailout funds, there is now a growing movement of progressives calling for a bailout for the American people.

Leading intellectuals such as Stanley Aronowitz and Frances Fox Piven are among those who signed a letter to President Obama urging him to consider providing a basic income to all Americans as the most effective way to stimulate the economy and promote economic equality for all.

The basic income is an updated version of the guaranteed annual income that enjoyed widespread support in the 1960's among leaders such as Martin Luther King, James Kenneth Galbraith, and James Tobin, and in the 1930's with Huey Long's Share Our Wealth campaign and the Townsend Plan, which lead to the creation of Social Security.

Join us by adding your name to this letter (send an email to [Steve@IncomeSecurityForAll.org](mailto:Steve@IncomeSecurityForAll.org)), forwarding it around to your friends and colleagues, or sending your own letter to the president and your members of Congress. For more information visit [www.incomsecurityforall.org](http://www.incomsecurityforall.org).

## Letter to President Obama

Eighth Congress of the U.S. Basic Income Guarantee Network, New York  
March 1, 2009

Income Security Institute  
PO Box 53050  
Washington, DC 20009

Dear President Barack Obama:

We urge you to consider establishing a basic income for all Americans as the most effective way to stop the contraction of the economy and begin a new era of economic prosperity for all.

This bold step would provide every American with a monthly income sufficient for their basic needs. It would truly stimulate the economy, bring customers to struggling businesses, restore consumer confidence, and provide freedom and dignity to all. And as Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote in *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (1967), "the most effective solution to poverty is to abolish it directly by a now widely discussed measure: the guaranteed income."

As our economy continues to shed well over half a million jobs each month, there are millions of Americans in dire financial straits. We should acknowledge that the economic system that we all depend upon is inherently risky and susceptible to wild swings. It is now time to ensure a basic level of income security for all in a way that is independent of the ever-changing nature of business cycles.

A full basic income for all Americans would cost approximately \$1.8 trillion according to some estimates, or we could start with a more modest proposal that costs less. The U.S. has committed to funding a host of economic stimulus programs over the past year that adds up to about \$9.7 trillion, according to [Bloomberg.com](#). More than \$3 trillion has already been spent or lent thus far, mostly in the financial sector, yet there is no end in sight to the ever-deepening recession. Spending \$1.8 trillion to deliver much-needed income directly to the American people is a relatively small price to pay for turning our economy around.

The state of Alaska has had a successful experience for 26 years providing an equal dividend from its oil revenues to all residents living there for a year or more. It has helped make Alaska the state with the most economic equality in the nation. There they have applied a key idea of one of the intellectual leaders of the American Revolution, Thomas Paine: the right of everyone to participate in the wealth of the nation. The basic income is also gaining support in many nations around the world, including Germany, Brazil, South Africa, Namibia, Ireland and Canada.

The members of the US Basic Income Guarantee Network (USBIG) and the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) are available to meet with your economic team to discuss this important issue. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Stanley Aronowitz, City University of New York  
Karl Widerquist, US Basic Income Guarantee Network  
Steven Shafarman, Income Security Institute  
Michael Howard, University of Maine  
Eduardo Matarazzo Suplicy, Brazilian Senator  
Frances Fox Piven, City University of New York  
Nicolaus Tideman, Virginia Tech  
Jason Burke Murphy, Educators for Social Justice, St. Louis University  
Richard K. Caputo, Yeshiva University  
Eri Noguchi, Columbia University  
Jesse Johnson, Mountain Party of West Virginia  
Almaz Zellekg, The New School  
Michael Lewis, Hunter College School of Social Work  
Harry F. Dahms, University of Tennessee  
Doug Cresson, Monmouth University  
Eron Lloyd, Henry George Foundation of America  
Chandra Pasma, Citizens for Public Justice  
Jeffery J. Smith, Geonomics.org

Al Sheahan, writer

Dan O'Sullivan, RiseUpEconomics.org

Buford Farris, retired sociologist

Sean Healy, Cori Justice

Brigid Reynolds, Cori Justice

Alanna Hartzok, Earth Rights

Stephen C. Clark, JaspersBox.com

David London, independent researcher, post-scarcity economics

Fabrizio Patriares, University of Rome, Democratic Party Italy

Reimund Acker, Netzwerk Grundeinkommen

Dorothee Shielbe Basha, Netzwerk Grundeinkommen

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