

**Prepared Testimony of Paul D. Tonko (NY-20)**  
**before the House Committee on the Budget**  
**Members' Day Hearing for Fiscal Year 2022**  
**Tuesday, March 22, 2021**

Good morning, Chairman Yarmuth, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on the Fiscal Year 2022 budget resolution.

America faces many intersecting national challenges. Congress must advance a budget resolution that reflects this.

President Biden understands that reducing climate pollution is not just scientifically necessary, it is also a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to propel our economy forward by investing in programs that put millions of Americans to work rebuilding our roads, bridges, electric grid, water systems, broadband networks, and buildings.

The President has called this “Build Back Better.”

To me, Build Back Better means rebuilding our economy for a more competitive future, not the fading dynamics of the past. America’s next generation of global economic leadership starts with supporting new technologies, advanced manufacturing, and resilient infrastructure in every community. Taking bold action now will make us healthier, safer, and more competitive for the rest of this century.

I propose three principles for our Build Back Better budget—

1. **Jobs.** Focus on smart, strategic investments that create and retain American jobs while modernizing our infrastructure, reducing pollution, and enhancing U.S. competitiveness, specifically by strengthening domestic manufacturing and associated supply chains.
2. **American Workers.** Support American workers by ensuring every project built with Federal funding upholds strong domestic content and prevailing wage requirements. Where appropriate, major projects should incorporate project labor agreements and other pro-worker practices.
3. **Better, Healthier Outcomes for Everyone.** Promote equity and environmental justice with investments that reach into every community. We can start by ensuring universal access to clean water, clean air, and opportunities to share in clean energy prosperity. Congress should seek to fulfill President Biden’s Justice 40 commitment.

With Congressional leadership, we can have every child in America get a pollution-free ride to school on a clean, safe, American-made bus.

We can remove every lead service line from our drinking water systems and provide clean water for every American.

We can put our building trades to work building resilient, next-generation infrastructure, including a smart electric grid and vast clean electricity resources.

We can invest in America's researchers and manufacturers to develop innovative technologies and ensure America reaps the rewards of these emerging industries.

We know this will create new economic opportunities across the country if we are willing to make this commitment.

My district is an example of this. We are hundreds of miles from any offshore wind site, but because of New York's commitment to wind energy, the Port of Albany will soon become home to hundreds of new manufacturing jobs.

With this in mind, the Energy and Commerce Committee has developed several proposals to make investments in our transition to a resilient, clean economy, covering dozens of programs at the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy.

Finally, I would caution against a myopic focus on "shovel-ready" projects. While we certainly want to maximize job creation in our public investments, shovel-ready requirements can worsen the growing divide that exists between communities that are thriving and those that are struggling.

Larger and wealthier communities are the ones that can afford the design and engineering work needed for a potential project to become shovel-ready. We need to ensure disadvantaged communities receive funding for this critical early-stage work.

In the 2009 Recovery Act, some of the most impactful investments, including the very first ARPA-E grants, had a longer time horizon but still delivered significant benefits.

Mr. Chairman, we find ourselves at a moment of profound need, not just for climate action, but for a vast rebuilding of our economy and our institutions. This budget is an opportunity for us to meet that need.

If we intend to lead this nation in ways that avoid the most dangerous and irreversible aspects of climate change, we cannot wait. But for as much as we stand to lose from inaction, we stand to gain even more from a transition to a clean economy that will create exciting opportunities that will benefit America's workers and communities— that is, if we act boldly and thoughtfully.

I believe we must be prepared to deliver these investments through whatever process or procedure is available to us.

I urge you to advance a budget resolution that reflects this moment of national need for all of us and for generations that will follow.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.