



Earth Manifesto

A Proposed Bill of Rights for Future Generations

"The status quo has many guardians, but the future is an orphan."

--- Timothy E. Wirth, United Nations Foundation and Better World Fund

Congress passed the original Bill of Rights in 1789 to guarantee essential human rights and personal liberties to the American people. This great Bill of Rights consisted of the first ten amendments to the Constitution. As stated in its Preamble, these rights were added to prevent the "misconstruction or abuse" of the powers of the federal government over its citizens, and to extend "the ground of public confidence in the Government."

Our Founders gave Congress the power in the Constitution to provide for the "general Welfare". In the long run, the general welfare and the common good are completely dependent on fair institutions, somewhat egalitarian social policies, honest economic accounting, sensible fiscal discipline, the conservation of resources, and a healthy natural environment. These needs can be satisfied in the long term only by a rigorous framework of respected rights for our descendants in the future. Salubriously, this coincides with our ultimate human moral imperative.

People tend to compete ruthlessly to gain advantages. Many interest groups seek a variety of goals in our society, and a lot of them strive to get more perks and benefits from the government. Some groups are very well represented, like rich people and big corporations, while tens of millions of others are poorly represented. The interest groups that are most under-represented in our politics are young people under the age of 18, because they cannot vote, and every voiceless person yet to be born. To remedy the injustices and extreme inequalities that result from this disenfranchisement, we need to make an overarching commitment to fairer guiding principles in the form of a Bill of Rights for Future Generations.

"Each generation, sharing in the heritage of the Earth, has a duty as trustee for future generations to prevent irreversible and irreparable harm to life on Earth and to human freedom and dignity."

--- Jacques-Yves Cousteau

Today, mindful that the well-being of all people in future generations is seriously threatened by short-term-oriented activities and present-day expediencies and greed-driven resource exploitation, this new Bill of Rights should be designed to ensure that future generations have reasonable prospects for prosperity, financial stability, dignity and a fair quality of life. This Bill of Rights should help ensure that irreparable harm is not done to Earth's vital ecosystems, and that we do not too severely damage the diversity of life on our home planet by driving thousands of species of life to extinction.

Let us eat the fruit of a sublime Tree of the Awareness of Right and Wrong, and share it universally, and acknowledge together that the ultimate moral good is to leave a fairer legacy to our descendants in future generations than current trends portend.

To make it clear that we are vitally committed to the greater good in the long run, Congress and leaders in nations worldwide should "pay forward" some good deeds by enacting this new Bill of Rights. This would help ensure that the prospects remain bright for our children, and theirs, and theirs. This Bill of Rights could propitiously provide better confidence and trust in our governing institutions.

"The nation behaves well if it treats its natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value."

--- Theodore Roosevelt

PROPOSED BILL OF RIGHTS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS:

Article 1. Sustainable Resource Use

Enact an Ecological Sanity Initiative that includes powerful incentives and smart green taxes that are designed to encourage resource conservation, cleaner energy, healthier forests, reduced reliance on non-renewable resources, protections of fresh water supplies, robust fisheries, the preservation of biological diversity, urban renewal, and protections of open spaces, parks and wilderness areas. This Initiative should give priority to safeguarding the health of natural ecosystems and the crucially valuable services they provide to humanity. This goal would best be achieved by investing in stronger protections of public lands, national forests, wetlands, marine sanctuaries and other wildlife habitats, and by striving to restore the resilience and symbiosis inherent in healthy biological diversity.

This Ecological Sanity Initiative would have twelve primary provisions, as enumerated in *Three Bills of Right: A Triumvirate of Responsible Actions for the Greater Good*. See this essay in the Earth Manifesto.

Article 2. Pollution Control and Mitigation

Require corporations that pollute rivers, lakes, oceans and the atmosphere to pay for the prevention or mitigation of the harmful impacts of their pollution-causing activities. These costs should be included in prices of all products and services rather than being allowed to be externalized onto the public and future generations. Strong steps should furthermore be taken to ensure that big corporations and governments adhere to precautionary principles that require cost-effective measures to be implemented to prevent the degradation of the environmental commons.

Article 3. Prevention of Anthropogenic Climate Disruption

Levy a cost on carbon dioxide emissions to deal with the adverse impacts of global warming caused by greenhouse gases, and of related changes in storm and weather patterns. Use the funds generated by this plan for two purposes: (1) to create a "rainy day fund" that covers the costs of natural disasters associated with climate disruption, including intensified hurricanes and more widespread floods, droughts, wildfires, heat waves, cold snaps, ocean acidification, and rises in sea level; and (2) to provide generous financing for the incipient and necessary 'green transition' to a cleaner and more renewable energy future.

Article 4. Stabilization of the National Debt

Prevent the federal government from using the expediency of deficit spending to mortgage the future. People today should not be allowed to saddle future generations with high interest cost obligations on rapidly accumulating sums of borrowed money. This goal should be accomplished by establishing an effective mechanism that reduces the national debt to less than 100% of annual GDP, as it had been from the end of World War II until a few years ago. Such a proposal is outlined in a Balanced Budget Initiative proposed in *One Dozen Big Initiatives to Positively Make America Great Again*. This initiative would have a profound influence on the primary drivers of our national policies - rich people and giant corporations -- by pressuring them to seek common cause with the American people rather than being stubbornly opposed to fair-minded and sensible solutions to our daunting budgetary challenges.

A significantly positive impact could also be achieved by implementing the proposals made in *Radically Simple Ways to Make America Fairer, and to Fix Both Social Security and Health Care So We Can Move On to Address Much Bigger Issues*. These proposals contain detailed plans on how we can help solve our tax, budget deficit, Social Security and healthcare challenges.

Article 5. Peaceful Coexistence

Strengthen international institutions to build peace between nations, and to prevent violent conflicts between countries over resources. Finance this effort to minimize wars by levying a surcharge on all U.S. sales of arms

abroad. Target this surcharge to raise a total \$100 billion per year. Also, seek to ratify nuclear arms control agreements with other nations, and dial down belligerence toward other countries, including North Korea and Iran.

Article 6. Sensible Family Planning and Women's Reproductive Healthcare

Significantly increase funding at home and abroad for women's healthcare clinics, family planning services, AIDS prevention, and free contraceptives for all women and men who want them. Support comprehensive sex education programs, and make sure they are medically accurate and socially sensible so that they will be successful in preventing sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted teen pregnancies.

Article 7. Social, Environmental and Intergenerational Justice

Increase the fairness of economic opportunity and economic security for all people by creating a more level playing field in our societies. Increase environment justice to assure that disadvantaged poor people not bear an undue burden of exposure to toxic wastes, air pollution, and environmental damages. Provide fair treatment and generous foreign aid to developing countries around the world to mitigate harms caused by irresponsible profiteering by multinational corporations. Ratify this Bill of Rights for Future Generations -- in the United States and in countries worldwide -- in order to protect the interests of those in the future from need-driven and mindlessly materialistic and irresponsibly greed-driven consumerism.

Conclusion

OK, here's the deal. We Americans supposedly have the right to choose good governance that truly represents government of the people, by the people and for the people. And we should be able to expect the leaders we choose to represent us honestly and demonstrate concern for liberty and justice for all, and a nation united, indivisible, rather than one whose citizens are divided against each other by master manipulators who use antagonisms and resentments to take advantage of the situation for their own personal gain.

Social cohesion is a public good, and when prosperity is more broadly shared, that is the surest path for creating this unifying bond. The nature of the status quo is proof that our representatives care more for their ambitions than for the public good. This makes our elections a terrible sham. The time has come for a radical revolution of values, informed by a strong commitment to a Bill of Rights for Future Generations!

Truly,
Dr. Tiffany B. Twain
January 1, 2017

DEDICATION

This *Bill of Rights for Future Generations* is dedicated to one of the most perceptive and visionary persons I've ever met, a man who died tragically of a sudden heart failure a few years ago at the age of 49. He was an eminently remarkable person who was boyish at heart and yet exceptionally aware, intelligent, energetic, alert, and gregarious. He greeted his friends and acquaintances alike with enthusiastic bear hugs, and conversed with them passionately about important causes and ecologically sane ideas, and he was quite commendably committed to making the world greener and more sustainable.

The idea for this Bill of Rights for Future Generations recognizes the vital inspiration of Eleanor Roosevelt, a champion of human rights who spearheaded the effort by the United Nations' Human Rights Commission to enact the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 in the aftermath of the Second World War. Eleanor Roosevelt called this Declaration the "International Magna Carta for all mankind". The Bill of Rights for Future Generations would fair-mindedly expand this respect for natural human rights to all people in the future.

"As people alive today, we must consider future generations. A clean environment is a human right like any other. It is therefore part of our responsibility toward others to ensure that the world we pass on is as healthy, if not healthier, than we found it."

--- The Dalai Lama

"Freedom is not license but responsibility -- the gift we have received and the legacy we must bequeath. Although our sojourn in life is brief, we are on a great journey. For those who came before us, and for those who will follow, our moral, political and religious duty is to make sure that this nation, which was conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all are equal under the law, is in good hands on our watch."

--- The honorable journalist Bill Moyers

"We are living at the expense of future generations. In this respect, it is plain that we are living in untruth."

--- Pope Benedict XVI, *Light of the World*

"Whatever happens to the Earth, happens to the children of the Earth ... All things are connected, like the blood that unites one family. Mankind did not weave the web of life; we are but one strand within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves."

--- Attributed to Chief Seattle in 1844, in a warning to the U.S. government against the misuse of land, water, air, and animal life.

"Behold my brothers, the Spring has come; the earth has received the embraces of the sun and we shall soon see the results of that love! Every seed is awakened and so has all animal life. It is through this mysterious power that we too have our being, and we therefore yield to our neighbors, even our animal neighbors, the same right as ourselves, to inhabit this land.

Yet, hear me, people, we have now to deal with another race -- small and feeble when our fathers first met them, but now great and overbearing. Strangely enough they have a mind to till the soil and the love of possession is a disease with them. These people have made many rules that the rich may break but the poor may not. They take their tithes from the poor and weak to support the rich and those who rule. They claim this mother of ours, the earth, for their own and fence their neighbors away; they deface her with their buildings and their refuse. The nation is like a spring freshet that overruns its banks and destroys all that are in its path."

--- Sitting Bull, a Lakota Sioux Chief, 1877

"Whatever you think or dream you can do, begin it.
Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it."

--- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The conservation of resources should be a true virtue of conservatives. But these folks tend to be looking backwards and throwing their lot in with right-wing authoritarians whose top priority is to impose control over others and gain narrow advantages for themselves. To achieve these goals, they are willing to deny scientific facts and act in ways certain to be harmful to people in future generations, and to evade individual responsibility for their impacts.