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IV. Sustainable Economics:

Community-centered, Steady State Economics is a humanized, environmentally responsible economic alternative founded upon our [10 Key Values](#) and the sub-disciplines of *Steady State, Ecological* and *True Cost Economics*. Steady State Economics retains capitalism's internal flexibility, allowing for both class diversity and individual opportunities to acquire wealth, but it reframes assumptions about the viability of infinite growth and unlimited resources as well as such "inevitable" as cyclic recessions and unemployment. Prioritizing the community, real people, and their environment, so that they are on par with traditional measures of productivity and consumption. Our integrative approach models natural ecological systems' success (noting that *ecology* actually derives from *economics*), not only ending wanton, environmental destruction and poverty, but balancing competitive and cooperative qualities with individual and collective elements of our society, so that all may flourish. Diverging from both orthodox free market and planned economies, our policies are *conservative* insofar as they *conserve* limited resources, but *progressive* in implementing a *future oriented* society; they are antithetical to both Big Business and Big Government and irreducible to traditional left-right thinking. Our vision is a genuine third way that holistically combines the best features of other models with the practical diversity of our communities, worldly realities, and life's natural order, so that public sector and private enterprise, society and individual, all play interrelated, mutually supporting, and equally important roles in the larger political society, ecosphere, and *eco (no)sphere*.

1. Core Principles and the Measurement of Success:

There are several fundamental principles and guidelines that give our economic vision form, including:

1. Assessing economic activity with **True Cost Pricing**, incorporating its environmental and social effects alongside financial costs in a comprehensive **Triple Bottom Line** accounting, and similarly measuring our real **economic, social, and environmental health** alongside traditional markers like GNP and GDP with such indicators:
 - i. Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare
 - ii. Infant Death Rates & Life Expectancy
 - iii. Genuine Progress Indicator
 - iv. Family Stability and Education Levels
 - v. Total Goods and Services (not just monetary)
 - vi. Disparity of Wealth Accumulation
2. Recognizing the **Limits of Growth & Resources** and creating a **Sustainable, Steady State Economy** that regards infinite growth as impossible and undesirable, and so strives for stable and robust markets, employment, production, and consumption rates in an economically efficient way through such principles as **Recycle, Reuse, Reduce, Repair**.
3. Encouraging **Regionalized Commerce and Local Self-sufficiency** of foods and basic necessities while working towards **Energy Independence, Carbon Neutrality, and the Peacetime Economy** in a strategic and holistic partnership between government, private enterprise, and our communities.
4. Choosing democracy over empire through **Fair Trade, not Free Trade**, repudiating military, political, and economic hegemony over other nations and peoples, and moderating the disparity of wealth so that it is in better accord with the natural diversity of personal industry, interest, and ability.
5. Ensuring **Diversity, Democracy, Decentralization, Plurality, and Equal Opportunity** in the public, private, and commons sectors of the economy, both with respect to individual participants and the kinds of structures, organizations, and businesses they may form.
6. Emphasizing **Stewardship and Fiduciary Responsibility in the Marketplace** over traditional *ownership* which only assumes the rewards associated with possession.
7. Advocating **Freedom and Innovation in the Humanized Marketplace** by limiting regulations and disincentives to economic activity only where the well-being of the environment, society, and community necessitates such, and generally emphasizing **Middle-sized Government** to accomplish this.
8. Following the **Precautionary Principle** (even while also promoting new research and developing a high technology economy), because our long term best interest lies in waiting for a scientific consensus about the dangers of specific new technologies before utilizing them; we should **conservatively** heed even a minority view calling for caution.

A. The Public Sector & Middle-sized Government:

We advocate a middle-sized public sector that first asks whether government is the appropriate vehicle to address an issue before acting. Since many problems are better solved by local and state governments, we prefer federal dispensation to regional authorities over direct intervention, except where centralized control is appropriate. Please see your State Green Party's platform for further information about how your local Green candidates will serve you.

1. Healthcare and Livable Income:

Government has a solemn duty to serve, protect, and care for its citizens, especially those most vulnerable including children and elderly. While federal government is an inefficient provider of services, it can establish universal minimum standards, bolster local economies, and support networks by decentralizing dispensations via local governments. Revamping Social Security and Medicare as our primary federal welfare and healthcare institutions, a simplified but superior system will ensure a living wage and universal health care for everyone by:

1. Implementing a universal income for every citizen sufficient to maintain a humble lifestyle above poverty, whereby state governments provide regular dispensations in local or mixed currency with matching funds from Social Security and additional support for children, veterans, elderly and disabled.
2. Revamping Social Security and consolidating other federal welfare programs, including food stamps and unemployment insurance, with a net increase in budgetary spending and dispensations.
3. Setting minimum healthcare standards and revamping Medicare to reimburse costs for everyone's emergency, critical, and routine care and, for children and veterans, full healthcare, thereby enabling state universal healthcare systems to work.
4. Consolidating Medicaid, SCHIP, and veterans' medical support under the Medicare program with increased total outlay to meet costs of universalized healthcare.
5. Providing matching funds to local governments which initiate social and environmental programs that improve citizen health and quality of life.
6. Opening government contracts to bidding by all citizens, ending "bundling" to encourage individual entrepreneurs and minority businesses, and generally increasing federal contracts to limit bureaucracy and keep government middle-sized.

2. National Debt and Proposed 2009 Federal Budget:

We are in danger of defaulting on our unprecedented National Debt with dire consequences for Social Security and the economy. Letting posterity pay or pretending unlimited growth and resources are possible is unethical and foolish. Eschewing corruption and the irresponsible mismanagement of public accounts, we propose a fiscally conservative policy that genuinely cultivates the larger economy, especially during recession. We will tax less, spend much less, but do and give much more to rebuild our economy and nation, now and tomorrow, by:

1. Deemphasizing bonds and their costly and onerous interest payments.
2. Stopping deficit spending except under genuinely extraordinary economic circumstances.
3. Repaying the National Debt with around a projected \$40 billion annual surplus and any additional funds recovered from the reorganization of the Federal Reserve (estimates range as high as \$100 billion).
4. Defending against inflation (see Monetary Policy).
5. Facilitating citizen and community enterprise and production.
6. Ensuring all citizens are consumer participants in the economy through Social Security.
7. Initiating large scale projects to improve infrastructure, protect the environment, and meet our social and international responsibilities.
8. We propose a specific budget for 2009 as follows:

Departments	Outlay (billions)	Notes
Military	\$100	On par with the combined 2 nd and 3 rd largest foreign military budgets.
Veteran Affairs	\$80	Doubled for facilitating transition to a peace time economy and ensuring veterans receive due support.
State	\$90	Increased with \$60 billion earmarked for foreign aid ending world hunger and disease, "Marshall Plans," and reparations.
Education	\$80	Doubled to ensure free education through college or vocational school.
Energy	\$80	Doubled to achieve safe, clean, renewable energy independence and carbon neutrality within seven years.
NASA	\$40	Doubled emphasizing environment, education, and international cooperation.
Transportation	\$40	Triple current outlays for major infrastructure development.
Interior	\$40	Increased with \$15 billion earmarked for Native American reparations and Park Service.
Agriculture	\$40	Doubled emphasizing support for diverse, small scale farms, and purchases of excess production to end world hunger.
Justice, HUD, Labor, Treasury	\$80	Transition HUD and Labor to state governments, reorient Justice to address real crime (not vice or victimless crime), and maintain Treasury.
Health & Human Services	\$80	Slight increase to manage Social Security and Medicare.
Social Security, Unemployment, Welfare Programs	\$1000	Increased with \$600 billion earmarked for Livable Wage Program providing every American with \$4,000 annually (\$16,000 for a family of four) based on matching state contributions.
Medicare, Medicaid, SCHIP	\$740	Sufficient to cover basic medical treatment for everyone.
Discretionary Spending	\$50	
National Debt Interest	\$260	Obligatory payments to Social Security and bonds, with further savings from the Federal Reserve reorganization (estimates at \$100 billion) paying off the National Debt.
Total Outlay:	\$2,800 (billion)	Total outlays are \$300 billion less than those officially submitted 2009 budget and our expected tax revenue calculated at \$20 billion less.
Expected Revenue:	\$2,840 (billion)	
Deficit Surplus:	+ \$40 (billion)	Pay off National Debt (in addition to savings of as much as \$100 billion derived from reorganizing the Federal Reserve). Also compare currently proposed deficit spending of -\$240 billion .

3. Taxes and Revenue:

Government revenue derives from taxes on one of three sources: Labor, Capital, and Land/Resources. Income tax on labor penalizes productivity, retards essential economic activity, and requires massive government bureaucracies (like the IRS) to manage, whereas capital oriented taxes often discourage important private and public investment. Consumption taxes, sales taxes, and other "flat taxes" are unfairly regressive, indiscriminately slow the economy, and are relatively inefficient for government to collect. We endeavor to create a genuinely fair, simple, and efficient tax code with **lower total tax** rates through several measures, including:

1. Reducing total taxes overall and providing states a greater share of revenue.
2. Eliminating sales taxes, payroll taxes, capital gains or taxes on income less than \$100,000, and other taxes primarily paid by low and middle income tax payers which reduce economic activity.
3. Introducing a graduated tax based on land rents over \$30,000 and gross business receipts in excess of \$1,000,000, which exempts small businesses and homeowners.
4. Increasing significantly the severance tax on the extraction of limited, non-renewable resources.
5. Collecting tariffs on imported goods according to their True Cost Price.
6. Employing selective value-added eco-taxes on environmentally and socially hazardous products to reflect their True Cost Pricing, including low mileage automobiles, cigarettes and plastic packaging.
7. Replacing estate taxes with significant inheritance taxes on any amounts received over \$1,000,000.
8. Using Tobin taxes and related fees to discourage unproductive financial activity that harms the economy.

B. Sustaining the Private Sector

Personal freedom and responsibility along with a profound respect for diversity also guide our policies. Understanding the central role private enterprise and the self-employed entrepreneur play in the sustainable economy, we will cultivate and support them with a "carrots rather than sticks" approach.

1. Employment & Job Creation:

While traditional economic thinking entails unemployment rates be kept artificially high to ensure plentiful, cheap, available labor, sustainable economics neither postulates nor implies limitless growth. This limits unemployment only to those individuals in career transition or who choose an alternative lifestyle. Measures we propose include:

1. Standardizing the work week at 30-35 hours, subsidizing lower salaries through the livable income program and ensuring companies remain competitive by removing their responsibility for health insurance and other social costs that more properly belong with individuals or the public sector.
2. Developing career centers that provide information, counseling, and other resources to individuals seeking work, such as cataloged jobs, self-employment options, and educational alternatives.
3. Reintroducing apprenticeship programs to complement traditional educational systems through incentives and support for suitable trades and professions.
4. Identifying community needs and providing incentives to local businesses that meet them.
5. Providing some government subsidized work, primarily through open bid contracts.
6. Creating a Superfund for workers like the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union in 1991, ensuring income, benefits, and retraining for workers displaced by peacetime and ecological conversion.

2. The Small and Medium-sized Business and the Self-Employed:

Small and medium sized businesses especially employ more Americans than any other sector of the economy and they exemplify the best features of entrepreneurialism and ingenuity. Significant supportive measures include:

1. Providing tax breaks that reward environmentally and socially responsible businesses and protecting them against predatory practices of larger corporations and franchises.
2. Introducing a simplified tax structure that does not penalize success and levels the playing field with their much larger competitors.
3. Removing excess red tape through such legislation as the Paper Simplification Act and decentralizing regulatory bodies so that local businesses work with local governments in a community based partnership.
4. Integrating local Chambers of Commerce with Career and Employment centers and providing all business needs in "one stop shops" that are supportive, comprehensive, efficient, and convenient for entrepreneurs.
5. Unencumbering business from providing health insurance and other social programs.
6. Guaranteeing low interest loans for investment meeting community defined needs.
7. Improving supportive infrastructure for business, including facilitating childcare networks, rebuilding satisfactory communications and transportation infrastructure and funding housing construction near transit to enhance and revitalize commercial districts.

3. The Cooperative, Collective, Credit Union, and Non Profit Corporation:

Community and worker owned businesses and organizations that are not principled on the profit motive will receive special attention and support, since they are generally by their nature democratic or altruistic in conception. In addition to the support offered to other businesses, special incentives are proposed, including:

1. Guaranteeing low interest loans and microlans to help people become active in such organizations.
2. Offering low interest larger loans for credit unions and community selected cooperative ventures.
3. Streamlining regulations and licensing and providing local government offices for support.

4. The Larger Company and Corporation in Perspective:

Larger companies and corporations also have a role to play in some sectors of the economy, including primary and secondary industry, manufacturing, transportation, utilities, finance, energy, etc.. Our approach to managing large corporations includes rewarding environmentally and socially responsible practices and further measures, including:

1. Providing loan and tax incentives that encourage employees and stakeholders to become shareholders.
2. Legislating fairly with respect to employee associations and unions and providing mediation services to assist labor and employers reach equitable agreements without resorting to strikes and layoffs.
3. Ending corporate welfare, including tax havens, subsidies, and unmonitored government contracts, but still providing exceptional government support following citizen and community review and recommendation.
4. Offering special incentives to companies that produce safe, clean, and renewable energy.
5. Exploring hybrid public/private corporate structures to address some essential services, such as utilities, but with emphasis placed on stakeholder control, citizen review, and community oversight.
6. Leaving local communities, municipalities, and regions final authority over whether public, private, mixed and hybrid corporations, or cooperatives best suit their needs.

5. Citizen Control of the For-Profit Corporation

Incorporation and the limitation of financial responsibility associated with entrepreneurial investment serves a limited legitimate need of the larger community, but the rights, freedoms and powers of especially large corporations have grown far beyond their utility over the past century. We intend to remedy the resulting economic and political imbalances through several measures, including:

1. Legislating and enforcing charter laws for corporations requiring minimum responsibility clauses emphasizing employees, environment, and communities where they operate, both within the USA and abroad.
2. Authorizing local governments and communities to set higher standards with revocation privileges for charters of corporations active in their area.
3. Making corporate executives and officers more directly accountable for any environmental, social, and economic harm caused by the corporation.
4. Modifying or removing corporate rights provided in the Interstate Commerce clause, the Contracts clause, and the Takings clause.
5. Returning control of the forests, water, air, radio frequencies, data formats, internet protocol, electronic distribution, and other commons to our communities with appropriate public bodies as designated stewards.
6. Renegotiating and rewriting treaties that provide unfair legal protection to multinational corporations, including those associated with GATT, NAFTA, WTO, IMF, and the World Bank.

6. Markets, Finance, Banking and Insurance Reform:

We emphasize decentralized, smaller, local markets and organizations in the financial sector, but some functions necessitate large, centralized and public or stakeholder controlled institutions. A diverse, green economy also allows for private insurance, stock markets, banks, and other businesses. Special measures to manage them include:

1. Improving legislation and enforcement to empower the Justice Department Anti-trust Division and the Securities and Exchange Commission, with priority placed on investigating larger transactions.
2. Preventing insider trading, price gouging, collusion, and other predatory and monopolistic practices.
3. Reviewing current economic terminology, assumptions, definitions, and developing a comprehensive code that is fair and understandable to a majority of citizens.
4. Legislating disclosure, anti-redding, usury, and other acts to control excessive interests rates and limit predatory or discriminatory lending and insurance practices aimed at vulnerable citizens or small business.
5. Supporting initiatives in secondary insurance markets that are socially and environmentally responsible.

C. Community Economics and the Commons

The "commons" include the many local, national, and international resources and infrastructure that do not or should not "belong" to either private interests or government as such, but which are of significant economic importance. Many of our current problems result from lack of responsible management of the commons, where concepts of "ownership" often do not even apply, but where "stewardship" frequently does fit well. There is a great need to identify in each case whether private interests, local communities, government, or other entities are the appropriate bodies to carry the responsibilities to manage and oversee their cultivation as well as profit from them. In general, Green stewardship emphasizes democratic and local community oversight where possible, but in such cases as privately "stewarded" land, for example, many of the associated responsibilities and benefits follow the deed to the private holder, whereas oceans and the upper atmosphere would be better served through international organizations.

1. Caretaking the Commons:

General principles relating to the commons include:

1. Recognizing the commons as containing:
 - a. The sun, stars, space, Earth's orbits, the air, wind, the radio frequency spectrum, and the atmosphere.
 - b. The oceans, rivers, forests, mountains, parks, caverns, other native properties of the planet, water tables, limited mineral resources, potential energy sources, and other naturally occurring resources.
 - c. Life itself, whole species, many specific organisms, associated information like DNA as well as ideas and thought itself, including culture, language, art, science, literature, media, theorems, algorithms, etc..
 - d. Essential human created infrastructures such as the internet, communications, transportation, etc..
 - e. Political and economic infrastructure, including our democracy, market places, currencies, and pensions.
2. Empowering local communities to preempt or authorize construction of major regional projects and provide citizen oversight of business transactions where resources and land are leased or sold to private interests.
3. Creating a government office and information clearinghouse dedicated to cataloging the commons, providing True Cost Pricing indexes related to their use, educating citizens, and facilitating community stewardship.
4. Developing an index of True Cost Pricing standards for commercial goods and services to help consumers and businesses responsibly evaluate products as well as requiring government budgets to employ it.
5. Achieving carbon neutrality (and energy independence) through major investment in clean, safe, and renewable energy production, employing wind, solar, geothermal, and ocean born energy producing technologies.

6. Investing in major projects to repair and improve local infrastructure, such as transportation with special emphasis placed upon environmentally sound technologies like railroads.
7. Providing significant incentives to companies and individuals who refurbish, renovate, and retrofit their buildings and dwellings in ways that promote the conservation of energy, resources, and the commons.

2. Defense Conversion, Technology, and the Precautionary Principle:

Human survival necessitates the removal of the profit motive from the military-industrial complex, the decentralization and democratization of respective administrative functions, and the adoption of the Precautionary Principle as the conservative standard by which the ever-increasing dangers of new technological development are gauged. Measures we will implement include:

1. Transitioning from a war economy to a peace economy in a responsible manner that limits unemployment through extensive retraining as well as incentives for weapons companies to produce nonmilitary goods.
2. Requiring nuclear weapons and energy companies to reorient towards beneficial large scale high technology industries, such as the civil space and renewable energy industries.
3. Limiting international arms markets and reorganizing weapons and related industries as nonprofit public companies dispersed among the states and also subject to local government oversight.
4. Reviewing the development of potentially dangerous technologies, such as *nanotechnology*, *biotechnology*, and other new technologies, and applying the Precautionary Principle through a publicly transparent process involving both experts and community elected representatives.
5. Creating a federal office to coordinate local review boards, transparently catalogue all ethically ambiguous or potentially dangerous technological developments, and publish initial and follow-up assessments.

3. Technology and the New Economy:

Technology and "know how" belong to the commons just as they affect everyone, but ingenuity is well-known to reside with individuals rather than governments or businesses. Accordingly, we emphasize individual freedoms to explore and create, but discourage excess, stifling legislation whose only function is to feed greed, by:

1. Prohibiting patents or copyrights on life forms, algorithms, equations, theories, DNA, colors or commonly-used words and phrases, and interpreting Fair Use laws in a broad manner.
2. Encouraging ingenuity through temporary copyrights and patents, but enforcing universal sunset provisions.
3. Sponsoring large scale technological projects by government, like the internet, which are then endowed to the public commons and decentralized in their control.
4. Retaining technological resources, such as the airwaves, as part of the commons, but providing fair auctioning of leases with compulsory stewardship licenses noting community responsibilities and standards.
5. Promoting the open-source software sector by initiating open bidding of government software contracts as well as adopting open-source standards, thereby also retaining public control of government IT infrastructure.

4. Pension Reform:

Pension funds are a prime example of the commons with a value in excess of \$3 trillion. At present, most pension funds are in the hands of private interests who provide modest returns to eventual recipients (barring Enron type mismanagement and embezzlement), but deny them real control over how the money is invested. Green values recognize citizen responsibility in choosing between diverse alternatives, emphasize local investment, and recommend further measures, including:

1. Providing contributors to pensions a voice in how funds are invested commensurate with their contributions.
2. Defending individuals' rights to choose freely from many alternatives, including independent, private, business, or government pensions.
3. Protecting individuals from predatory practices by providing public education and counseling services, legislating minimum standards, and empowering the justice department to oversee fair market practices.
4. Introducing incentives like matching contributions for pension funds and secondary markets that invest in environmentally and socially responsible industries that create good jobs efficiently and locally.

5. Green Monetary Policy:

Our currency and monetary system also belong to the commons. The recent slew of financial crises in 2008, including the "Sub Prime" Mortgage Crisis, significant inflation, and a radical devaluation of the dollar compels us to rectify the poor stewardship of our monetary system by the Federal Reserve Banks in the private sector and the fiscally irresponsible mismanagement of our government in the public sector. We will address current economic and financial problems through several measures:

1. Reconstituting and democratizing the current 12 regional Federal Reserve Banks as several state or regional level institutions, banks and credit unions, each managed by broadly elected boards of directors.
2. Setting federal monetary policy and providing stewardship of the dollar and federal credit markets through a Federal Monetary Control Board constituted of representatives from each of the aforementioned institutions as well as the legislative and executive branches of the federal government.
3. Adding and subtracting currency and government securities to the overall money supply in a responsible manner that controls inflation and pegs the dollar to a fundamental standard, such as energy (kilowatt hours) and/or other representative commodities, to provide further protection against devaluation.
4. Retaining the dollar as our primary currency, but permitting regional institutions in conjunction with state governments to create local currencies and set policies through regional monetary control boards.
5. Promoting environmentally and socially beneficial investment, discouraging regional divestment, supporting such legislation as the Community Reinvestment Act, and maintaining public, timely key performance data on housing loans, community investment, loans to minority run enterprises, and generally supporting transparency in monetary matters that affect the community.