

## **For a healthier America, it's not Project 2025**

**Dear friends,**

Writing and speaking often about public health across the nation means trying to make sure that folks realize that the things that have the most effect on our health are often the things we don't think of. We tend to think of "healthcare" or "hospitals" or "doctors" as affecting our health. While they, of course, do, there is so much more that makes our communities healthier, our neighborhoods safer, and our nation stronger. Those "things" are what we, as public health practitioners, try to address. We conduct research on gun violence prevention. We advocate for access to healthy foods. We recognize that everyone, no matter where they live, what job they hold, or who they love, that everyone should have access to healthcare and the full range of reproductive health services. We work tirelessly for a healthier nation. Why? **Because we know that it is these "things" that will make us healthier. These are all public health.**

But, as we read the headlines, view the Tik Toks, watch the Instagram reels, it's very clear to us that not everyone else recognizes that public health priorities should be our national priorities. Frightening though, we've seen just the opposite. We learned recently about Project 2025: Mandate for Leadership, which is a set of policy recommendations meant to be implemented by the newly elected Republican President of the U.S. Have you heard about it? No doubt as one steeped in public health, you have. But we reckon most have not, especially most voters. If you do read it, you'll see right away how it worries us. It will stop the progress that we've made in environmental protections, workplace safety, human rights, and the freedoms that our nation was founded upon. It will chip away at our democracy. It is a whopping 922 page "Presidential Transition Project" from the Heritage Foundation. We are struck by how the authors and editors believe that this work is to make our country better. Better for whom? When you go through each section, each policy, each recommendation, you will see that despite what it proposes to do in the Acknowledgements, this Project 2025 is not looking to make our country better for all. The historically marginalized are left behind again. **Children, older adults, and those in any need will be left to fend for themselves if the Project's efforts to end Head Start, Medicaid, and Social Security become a reality.** Forget advocating for more environmental protections and efforts to halt climate change. **Project 2025 lays out ways to dismantle our current environmental protections.**

Although the mandates for change described in this lengthy document include every aspect of government policy recommendation, **we have chosen to focus on particular topics that we feel are relevant for other public health advocates and activists.** Namely, our paper highlights sections of the Project 2025 document that address health and healthcare (Department of Health and Human Services), the environment (Environmental Protection Agency and Department of the Interior), peace (Department of Defense and Homeland Security) and nuclear power and energy (Department of Defense and Department of the Interior). Related recommendations contained in these sections

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represent a small fraction of the document's overall reach. We encourage other public health advocates and activists to examine Project 2025's proposed guidelines and inform your communities about these impending threats in order to mobilize the public to oppose Project 2025.

### **Project 2025 in its own words**

The Heritage Foundation-supported Project 2025 is replete with implications for and challenges to public health. Project 2025 proposes changes to every aspect of U.S. government and is a manifesto for designing the playbook to be enacted upon during the first 180 days of a new Republican presidency with recommendations and de-regulating related to all branches of government:

- Department of Defense
- Department of Homeland Security
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Education
- Department of Energy and Related Commissions
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Department of Interior
- Department of Justice
- Department of Labor

Although internal Republican Party controversy about Project 2025 has distanced the document from current GOP candidates, and even disavowed that former President Donald Trump is aware of it, the policy recommendations that Project 2025 makes may continue to reverberate in extremist circles long past the upcoming 2024 election. Additionally, it is important to note that a number of the Project's authors include former Trump cabinet members, White House aides, and/or appointees.

There are many sections within Project 2025 that pertain to public health, but we wanted to share some of our findings that we found particularly relevant with you, our colleagues in public health and the movements for peace, environmental justice, and reproductive justice.

Project 2025 envisions extremist right-wing policy on all levels, including:

- Defines marriage as union of one man and one woman
- Denies government support for transgender individuals (in the military or other settings)
- Dismantles protections for LGBTQI+ individuals
- Supports xenophobic immigration policies

- Eradicates environmental protection provisions – to replace with fossil fuel and oil industry economics
  - Deregulates protections for water and air quality
- Weakens protections for workers’ safety
- Abolishes mask mandates and other public health measures for future pandemics
  - Advocates use of “light” as medical intervention as opposed to vaccines
- Fortifies the military-industrial complex
  - Weaponizes space
  - Advocates for increasing nuclear capacity
- Promotes homogenizing what document calls “Our Indian populations” (*sic*)
  - Recommends consolidating all tribal centers into one body and location that would represent all tribal entities (which may be located in Colorado or another western state)

Although spotlighting the sanctity of human life that “*begins at conception and ends at natural death*”<sup>1</sup>(page 489) Project 2025 is silent about gun violence and the tremendous impact it has on morbidity and mortality. Furthermore, the health and wellbeing of workers is almost completely ignored except for allowing young people to work in hazardous settings (e.g. mines or certain types of construction) with their parents’ permission.

Don’t take our word for it. To further illustrate the health-threatening recommendations made by the authors of Project 2025, we are including our notes (please see below) with direct quotations from sections within the document. Page numbers refer to citation’s location in the document and all direct quotations from the Project 2025 Mandate are italicized.

### **Our Call to Action**

Yes, Project 2025 is frightening. But, we can and must be brave. We know that we can harness our fear and be brave together. We will not let this “blueprint” define our future and halt our progress for humankind and public health. Check out Project 2025. See what most frightens or angers you (or does both). Maybe for you, it’s **the section that calls for rejecting free school meals for children**. Take that piece, advocate for change. Write to your elected officials at all levels – local, state, and national – sharing your evidence-based research and personal stories on how feeding children is key to keeping children and communities healthier. Write to your local newspaper. Create and share your thoughts as an Instagram reel. Consider running for a local office. Do something. Need more ideas of what to do and how to do it? Check out the American Public Health Association’s Speak for Health resources at <https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/advocacy-for-public-health/speak-for-health>.

We don't have a minute to waste. We must transform our fears into action.

For a healthier America,

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*\* This letter, call to action, and our notes were prepared by Chris & Beth in their personal capacity as frustrated and worried public health practitioners. The opinions expressed in this article are the authors' own and do not reflect the view of the American Public Health Association.*

### **Don't take our word for it. It's all in Project 2025**

#### **Project 2025 Impacts on Public Health and on Reproductive Justice**

**The following recommendations are addressed to the Department of Health and Human Services:**

*“The COVID-19 pandemic made it painfully clear that both international organizations—and some countries—are only **too willing to trample human rights in the name of public health**. For example, the WHO was, and remains, willing to support the suppression of basic human rights, partially because of its close relationship with human rights abusers like the PRC.” (page 192)*

*“Under President Trump, HHS was dedicated to serving **“all Americans from conception to natural death”**. (page 489)*

*“**Goal #1: Protecting Life, Conscience, and Bodily Integrity.** The Secretary should pursue a robust agenda to protect the fundamental right to life, protect conscience rights, and uphold bodily integrity rooted in biological realities, not ideology. From the moment of conception, every human being possesses inherent dignity and worth, and our humanity does not depend on our age, stage of development, race, or abilities. The Secretary must ensure that all HHS programs and activities are rooted in a deep respect for innocent human life from day one until natural death: **Abortion and euthanasia are not health care.** (page 450)*

*“**Goal #4: Preparing for the Next Health Emergency.** Unaccountable bureaucrats like Anthony Fauci should never again have such broad, unchecked power to issue health “guidelines” that will certainly be the basis for federal and state mandates. Never again should public health bureaucrats be allowed to hide information, ignore information, or*

*mislead the public concerning the efficacy or dangers associated with any recommended health interventions because they believe it may lead to hesitancy on the part of the public. The only way to restore public trust in HHS as an institution capable of acting responsibly during a health emergency is **through the best of disinfectants—light.***” (page 452)

*“COVID-19 exposed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as perhaps the most incompetent and arrogant agency in the federal government. CDC continually misjudged COVID-19, from its lethality, transmissibility, and origins to treatments. We were told masks were not needed; then they were made mandatory. CDC botched the development of COVID tests when they were needed most.”* (page 452)

*“Respect for Life and Conscience. The CDC should eliminate programs and projects that do not respect human life and conscience rights and that undermine family formation. It should ensure that it is not promoting abortion as health care. It should fund studies into the risks and complications of abortion and ensure that it corrects and does not promote misinformation regarding the comparative health and psychological benefits of childbirth versus the health and psychological risks of intentionally taking a human life through abortion.”* (page 455)

*“The CDC oversaw and funded the development and testing of the COVID-19 vaccines with aborted fetal cell lines, insensitive to the consciences of tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of people who objected to taking a vaccine with such a link to abortion. As evidenced by litigation across the country, it is likely that thousands were fired unjustly because of the exercise of their consciences or faith on this question, which could have been avoided with a modicum of concern for this issue from CDC. There is never any justification for ending a child’s life as part of research, and the research benefits from splicing or growing aborted fetal cells and aborted baby body parts can easily be provided by alternative sources. All such research should be prohibited as a matter of law and policy.”* (page 455)

*“Because liberal states have now become sanctuaries for abortion tourism, HHS should use every available tool, including the cutting of funds, to ensure that every state reports exactly how many abortions take place within its borders, at what gestational age of the child, for what reason, the mother’s state of residence, and by what method.”* (page 455)

*“The CDC should immediately end its collection of data **on gender identity, which legitimizes the unscientific notion that men can become women (and vice versa)** and encourages the phenomenon of ever-multiplying subjective identities.”* (page 455)

*“Abortion Pills. Abortion pills pose the single greatest threat to unborn children in a post-Roe world.”* (page 457)

*“Mail-Order Abortions. Allowing mail-order abortions is a gift to the abortion industry that allows it to expand far beyond brick-and-mortar clinics and into Department of Health and Human Services pro-life states that are trying to protect women, girls, and unborn children from abortion.”* (page 458)

*“The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the world’s largest biomedical research agency and is made up of 27 different components called Institutes and Centers. Despite its popular image as a benign science agency, NIH was responsible for paying for research*

*in aborted baby body parts, human animal chimera experiments, and gain-of-function viral research that may have been responsible for COVID-19.” (page 460)*

*“Funding for scientific research should not be controlled by a small group of highly paid and unaccountable insiders at the NIH, many of whom stay in power for decades. **The NIH monopoly on directing research should be broken.**” (page 462)*

***“Woke Policies.** Under Francis Collins, NIH became so focused on the #MeToo movement that it refused to sponsor scientific conferences unless there were a certain number of women panelists, which violates federal civil rights law against sex discrimination. This quota practice should be ended, and the NIH Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, which pushes such unlawful actions, should be abolished. NIH has been at the forefront in pushing junk gender science. Instead, it should fund studies into the short-term and long-term negative effects of crosssex interventions, including “affirmation,” puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones and surgeries, and the likelihood of desistence if young people are given counseling that does not include medical or social interventions”.* (page 462)

*“Repeal harmful health policies enacted under the Obama and Biden Administrations such as the Medicare Shared Savings Program and Inflation Reduction Act.” (page 465)*

*“The dramatic increase **in Medicaid expenditures** is due in large part to the ACA (Obamacare), which mandates that states must expand their Medicaid eligibility standards to include all individuals at or below 138 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL), and the public health emergency, which has prohibited states from performing basic eligibility reviews.” (page 466)*

*“Add work requirements and match **Medicaid** benefits to beneficiary needs.” (page 468)*

*“Prohibit Planned Parenthood from receiving Medicaid funds.” (page 471)*

***“The Life Agenda.** The Office of the Secretary should eliminate the HHS Reproductive Healthcare Access Task Force and install a pro-life task force to ensure that all of the department’s divisions seek to use their authority to promote the life and health of women and their unborn children. Additionally, HHS should return to being known as the Department of Life by explicitly rejecting the notion that abortion is health care and by restoring its mission statement under the Strategic Plan and elsewhere to include furthering the health and well-being of all Americans “from conception to natural death.” (page 489)*

*Protect faith-based grant recipients from religious liberty violations that maintain a biblically based, social science–reinforced definition of marriage and family. (page 481)*

*Eliminate the Head Start program. (page 482)*

***Woke Policies.** Under Francis Collins, NIH became so focused on the #MeToo movement that it refused to sponsor scientific conferences unless there were a certain number of women panelists, which violates federal civil rights law against sex discrimination. This quota practice should be ended, and the NIH Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, which pushes such unlawful actions, should be abolished. (page 462)*

### **Environmental Justice Impact**

**The following recommendations are addressed to the U.S. Department of Energy, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of the Interior:**

*“Unleash private-sector energy innovation by **ending government interference** in energy decisions. **Stop the war on oil and natural gas.** Allow individuals, families, and business to use the energy resources they want to use and that will best serve their needs.”* (page 365)

*“**Eliminate political and climate-change interference** in DOE approvals of liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports. In addition, Congress should reform the Natural Gas Act<sup>8</sup> to expand required approvals from merely nations with free trade agreements to all of our allies, such as NATO countries.”* (page 369)

*“Focus on energy and science issues, not politicized social programs. The next Administration should **stop using energy policy to advance politicized social agendas.** Programs that sound innocuous, such as “energy justice,”<sup>9</sup> Justice40,<sup>10</sup> and DEI, can be transformed to promote politicized agendas.”* (page 370)

*“**End the focus on climate change and green subsidies.** Under the Biden Administration, EERE is a conduit for taxpayer dollars to fund progressive policies, including decarbonization of the economy and renewable resources. EERE has focused on reducing carbon dioxide emissions to the exclusion of other statutorily defined requirements such as energy security and cost. For example, EERE’s five programmatic priorities during the Biden Administration are all focused on decarbonization of the electricity sector, the industrial sector, transportation, buildings, and the agricultural sector.”* (page 378)

*“**Eliminate energy efficiency standards for appliances.** Pursuant to the Energy Policy and Conservation Act of 1975 as amended, the agency is required to set and periodically tighten energy and/or water efficiency standards for nearly all kinds of commercial and household appliances, including air conditioners, furnaces, water heaters, stoves, clothes washers and dryers, refrigerators, dishwashers, light bulbs, and showerheads. Current law and regulations reduce consumer choice, drive up costs for consumer appliances, and emphasize energy efficiency to the exclusion of other important factors such as cycle time and reparability.”* (page 378)

*“**Eliminate the Clean Energy Corps** by revoking funding and eliminating all positions and personnel hired under the program.”* (page 386)

*“Defend American interests in the Arctic Circle. The next Administration needs to define American strategic and economic interests in the Arctic Circle.”* (page 390)

*“Restart Yucca Mountain licensing. DOE should restart the Yucca Mountain licensing process. Any continuation of interim storage facilities should be made part of an integrated waste management system that includes geologic storage.”* (page 397)

*“Should not use environmental issues like climate change as a reason to stop LNG projects. Should ensure that the natural gas pipelines that are needed deliver more of the product to market, both for domestic use and export, and are reviewed, developed and constructed in a timely manner.”* (page 408)

*“**Putting guardrails on downwind states is an abuse of the CAA § 126(b)19 petition process.** EPA must ensure, in keeping with statutory text, that petitions identify a reasonably discrete “group” of upwind sources alleged to violate the good neighbor provision.”* (page 424)

*“Remove the Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program (GHGRP) for any source category that is not currently being regulated.”* (page 425)

*“Regulating Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) Under the American Innovation and Manufacturing (AIM) Act22 - Repeal Biden Administration implementing regulations for the AIM Act that are unnecessarily stringent and costly.” (page 425)*

**“Day One Priorities:**

*“Notify Congress that EPA will not conduct any ongoing or planned science activity for which there is not clear and current congressional authorization. This priority should be underscored in the President’s first budget request.” (page 436)*

*“Suspend and review the activities of EPA advisory bodies, many of which have not been authorized by Congress or lack independence, balance, and geographic and viewpoint diversity.” (page 437)*

**Project 2025 Impacts on Peace and Anti-Militarism**

**The following recommendations are addressed to the U.S. Department of Energy and the Department of the Interior and the Defense Department:**

*“Continue to develop new warheads for each branch of the triad (land, sea, and air defenses). If possible, reverse the Biden Administration’s decision to retire the B83 bomb (in order to maintain two aircraft-delivered warheads) and its decision to cancel the submarine-launched cruise missile (SLCM). Also undertake an evaluation of the need for nuclear antisubmarine and air defense weapons in light of emerging threats. Maintain two production sites for plutonium pits (a key element of warhead production) at Los Alamos and Savannah River.” (page 399)*

*“Reject ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and indicate a willingness to conduct nuclear tests in response to adversary nuclear developments if necessary.” (page 399)*

**“MISSION STATEMENT FOR A REFORMED DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY:**

***Developing new nuclear weapons and naval nuclear reactors” (page 366)***

*“The U.S. nuclear arsenal needs to be updated and reinvigorated if we are to be able to deal effectively with threats from China, Russia, and other adversaries. As a semi-autonomous agency, the NNSA has the primary responsibility for researching and designing new nuclear warheads and for ensuring that the existing nuclear arsenal is still potent.” (page 370)*

*“Priority No. 1: Reestablish a culture of command accountability, nonpoliticization, and **warfighting focus.**” (page 92)*

*“Priority No. 2: Transform our armed forces for maximum effectiveness in an era of great-power competition.” (page 92)*

*“Priority No. 3: Provide necessary support to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) border protection operations. **Border protection** is a national security issue that requires sustained attention and effort by all elements of the executive branch.” (page 92)*



**“Implement nuclear modernization and expansion.** *The United States manifestly needs to modernize, adapt, and expand its nuclear arsenal.*”(page 94)

**“Needed Reforms:**

*“Prioritize nuclear modernization”* (page 123)

**“Restore the nuclear infrastructure.** *The United States must restore its necessary nuclear infrastructure so that it is capable of producing and maintaining nuclear weapons.*” (page 124)

*“Expand and modernize the U.S. nuclear force so that it has the size, sophistication, and tailoring to deter Russia and China simultaneously. 2. Develop a nuclear arsenal with the size, sophistication, and tailoring— including new capabilities at the theater level—to ensure that there is no circumstance in which America is exposed to serious nuclear coercion.”* (page 95)

**“Strengthen America’s defense industrial base:** (page 96)

*1. Replenish and maintain U.S. stockpiles of ammunition and other equipment that have been depleted as a result of U.S. support to Ukraine. This will strengthen the defense industry supply chain and ensure that adequate inventory exists if it is needed for a future conflict.*

*2. Collaborate with industry to develop a prioritized list of reforms that the DOD and Congress can enact and implement to incentivize industry to help America’s military innovate and field needed capabilities.”* (page 96)

**“MISSION STATEMENT FOR A REFORMED DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY: Developing new nuclear weapons and naval nuclear reactors”** (page 366)

**“Improve military recruiters’ access to secondary schools and require completion of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery — Department of Defense (ASVAB)—the military entrance examination—by all students in schools that receive federal funding.”** (pages 101-102)

*“Encourage Members of Congress to **provide time to military recruiters during each townhall session in their congressional districts.**”* (pages 101-102)

*“Increase the number of Junior ROTC programs in secondary schools.”* (pages 101-102)

*“Restore standards of **lethality and excellence.**”*(page 103)

*“Reinstate servicemembers to active duty who were discharged for not receiving the COVID vaccine, restore their appropriate rank, and provide back pay.”* (page 103)

*“Eliminate Marxist indoctrination and divisive critical race theory programs and abolish newly established diversity, equity, and inclusion offices and staff.”* (page 103)

*“Reverse policies that allow transgender individuals to serve in the military. Gender dysphoria is incompatible with the demands of military service, and the use of public monies for transgender surgeries or to facilitate abortion for servicemembers should be ended.”* (page 104)

*“Audit all curricula and health policies in DOD schools for military families, remove all inappropriate materials, and reverse inappropriate policies.”* (page 104)

**“U.S. SPACE FORCE:**

*“Reverse the Biden Administration’s defensive posture. The Biden Administration has eliminated almost all offensive deterrence capabilities and instead will rely solely on defensive capabilities of disaggregation, maneuver, and reconstitution—the most costly, the slowest, and ultimately the most fragile architecture selection.” (page 117)*

*“ Reestablish offensive capabilities to guarantee a favorable balance of forces, efficiently manage the full deterrence spectrum, and seriously complicate enemy calculations of a successful first strike against U.S. space assets.” (page 118)*

**“Needed Reforms**

*“Rescue recruiting and retention. Recruiting was the worst in 2022 that it has been in two generations and is expected to be even worse in 2023. Some of the problems are self-inflicted and ongoing. The recruiting problem is not service-specific: It affects the entire Joint Force.” (page 102)*

*“Improve military recruiters’ access to secondary schools and require completion of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery.” (page 102)*

*“Encourage Members of Congress to provide time to military recruiters during each townhall session in their congressional districts.” (page 102)*

*“Increase the number of Junior ROTC programs in secondary schools.” (page 103)*