

12 Bold Ideas to Get Americans Ready for the New Economy

**Jonathan Cowan**

President

**Jim Kessler**

Senior Vice President for Policy

[@ThirdWayKessler](https://twitter.com/ThirdWayKessler)**Gabe Horwitz**

Vice President for the Economic Program

[@HorwitzGabe](https://twitter.com/HorwitzGabe)**Joon Suh**

Former Senior Policy Advisor, Economic Program

The economy has changed; so should our policies. In *Ready for the New Economy*, we outline over 70 policies to generate economic growth that benefits the middle class. Here are **12 big, actionable, and fully paid-for ideas** to make the twin forces of globalization and technological change work *for* Americans—not against them.

1. **A minimum, employer-provided 50¢/hour private pension contribution** radically improves retirement income, ends elderly poverty when coupled with existing Social Security, and uses the capital markets to reduce income disparity, not widen it.
2. **A \$400 billion Strategic Investment Initiative** in infrastructure, research, science, energy, and advanced manufacturing creates long-term growth and private-sector jobs.

3. **\$450 billion in *Wealth Builder Contributions*** gives working people \$500 per year, for the next decade, dedicated to building financial wealth through contributions to retirement accounts, college savings, student loans, or mortgages.
4. **A *Mobility Fund* for low-income communities** that raises the top capital gains rate by 5-points and applies the \$80 billion to a *Mobility Fund* that leverages over \$700 billion in private capital to infuse low-income areas with sustainable jobs and businesses.
5. **A new *College Compact*** holds colleges accountable for improving instruction, increases abysmal graduation rates, and improves student outcomes so a family's biggest investment in the future pays off.
6. **\$60 billion in *Home Equity Vouchers*** matches contributions of up to \$500 per year, over the next decade, for additional mortgage principal payments to help 12 million families build home equity, relieve the burden of debt, and realign incentives in the mortgage market.
7. **\$130 billion to launch a skills revolution** that improves access and quality of pre-K programs, overhauls teacher loan forgiveness and certification, modernizes teacher pay and promotion, and establishes teaching academies to improve student learning.
8. **Increase U.S. annual exports by \$1 trillion by 2025** through TPP and TTIP trade deals, personalized export assistance for small and medium-sized businesses, and streamlined export bureaucracy to help American companies seize growing overseas markets.
9. **A 12-month “phased leave” work option** for federal employees allows new parents to continue earning and stay on the career ladder by working part-time for a year after full-time leave benefits expire.

10. **Mid-career Prep for Success academies** that provide free, high-quality prep courses for adults to hone basic skills so they can then succeed in community colleges or worker training programs.
11. **A regional minimum wage hike** raises the wage floor to \$10-\$12 based on average hourly wages and regional cost variations, with automatic readjustments every 3 years.
12. **A middle class pay raise** through fifteen specific policies that would reduce both federal government health care spending and costs to employers and employees—making much needed room for increased wages.