



5 ways to: Stay engaged in the struggle for economic justice

Premature deaths due to economic factors such as poverty, hunger, lack of quality health care and relative social status are far greater than those due to armed conflict and homicide. Fortunately, there are lots of ways to get and stay engaged in the struggle to win real victories in real time. Here are a few:

1. Dial in to the political process.

For starters, this means paying attention to international, national, and local issues. It's also pretty obvious but registering to vote is important. But it's even more important to show up and vote every time you legally can all the way up and down the ticket. Remember too that a lot of important things are decided at the state level. Here's a simple website where US residents can enter your zip code and find out who their state representatives are and how to reach them: openstates.org. And here's a quick link to find your US representatives and senators: govtrack.us/congress/members.

2. Follow federal budget and policy issues.

Whether it's health care or Social Security or aid to higher education, federal decisions matter. A good place to learn about how these affect Americans with low and moderate incomes is the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) Another good source of information and advocacy about these issues is the Economic Policy Institute (EPI).

3. Likewise, it's important to follow state budget and policy issues.

Most states have at least one think tank devoted to these issues. A good place to learn more is the State

Priorities Partnership, which is supported by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Likewise, the Economic Policy Institute supports several related groups working at the state and local level in its Economic Analysis and Research (EARN) Network. Connecting with one or both of these groups (they have members in common) is a great way to learn about the issues in play in your area. They may also be able to refer you to sympathetic groups you can link up with. It's important to work with the most reliable and current information available.

4. Build a base.

Reach out to Friends and friends as groups and individuals to study, educate about and mobilize on the economic justice issues that matter to you and are in play. If you have a base, you can more effectively connect the dots outlined above and engage in effective action.

5. Vote with your dollars.

This doesn't mean buying elections, but it does mean electing to buy products that support the values of justice and solidarity. This could mean anything from supporting the local food movement to patronizing locally owned businesses to buying products made with union labor or sustainable practices.

That list is just a beginning. The more you learn and the more people and groups you connect with, the larger the sphere of action is and the greater the range of possibilities. Remember too that effective work for economic justice walks the line between voluntarism and determinism. Our wishes alone won't make things happen or keep bad things from happening. The degree of change that can be achieved is a function both of objective conditions and our subjective response, and these constantly change, interact with, and influence each other.

This list was created by Rick Wilson and Lida Shepard from their workshop, "Economic justice 101: What it is, why it matters, how to do it," at AFSC's 2017 Centennial summit.