

May 6, 2020

Dear Vice President Joe Biden,

On behalf of our organizations and our millions of members and supporters, we ask that you remove Larry Summers from any role advising your campaign and exclude him from a future Biden administration. Summers has put the interests of large corporations ahead of working families in the United States and around the world, fueled the climate crisis, and undermined efforts to ensure gender equality. In short, it is hard to imagine a worse person than Larry Summers to guide the next President toward an economy that works for all.

Larry Summers has consistently advocated for deregulation — cutting critical safeguards that protect people from corporate abuse.¹ Summers has worked in paid advisory roles for big banks, hedge funds, and venture capitalists. He has a long track record of steering the U.S. government toward policies that prop up Wall Street at the expense of working people, from fighting efforts to regulate derivatives in the Clinton administration through mismanaging the fallout during the Great Recession. And he consistently has refused to take responsibility for policy failures that have life-and-death implications for working people everywhere.² More recently, he opposed the modest wealth tax proposals that were raised during the 2020 campaign as “approaching confiscatory.”³ In short, Larry Summers has never seen an economic proposal that benefits the working class that he has not sought to undermine.

Larry Summers’ record on climate and environmental justice is abysmal. He undermined efforts in the Clinton administration to push for strong global greenhouse emissions limits and environmental protections in the Kyoto protocol.⁴ He has never renounced his support for the climate-killing Keystone XL pipeline, and in both the Clinton and Obama administrations cautioned against moving quickly to curb carbon emissions and against large public investment to transform energy systems.⁵ And despite a global carbon budget that is already overspent, Summers supported lifting the crude oil export ban and recently indicated that he wants to ensure a “strong” U.S. oil industry to maintain America’s global political dominance.⁶

Indeed, Larry Summers has done nothing but harm virtually every effort to address the inequitable impacts of climate change and pollution. Decades ago, Summers signed his name to a memo stating that African nations were “under-polluted” and that “the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest wage country is impeccable.”⁷ Such a callous disregard for the well-being of people and planet is morally abhorrent and unacceptable within the ranks of Democratic leadership.

Finally, Larry Summers’ horrendous comments about women lacking an intrinsic aptitude for math and science, his relationship with Jeffrey Epstein, and known penchant for bullying are simply disqualifying.⁸ He lacks the integrity, judgment and temperament needed in a Biden administration.

We respectfully ask that you seek the advice of economists that put people first, recognize the need for social and environmental justice, support the large public investment we know will be

needed for the energy transition, and have a proven record advancing an equitable economy that works for all.

Sincerely,

1. American Family Voices
2. Center for Biological Diversity
Action Fund
3. Climate Hawks Vote
4. The Climate Mobilization
5. Demand Progress
6. Earth Action, Inc.
7. End Climate Silence
8. Food & Water Action
9. Friends of the Earth Action
10. Greenpeace, Inc.
11. Justice Democrats
12. Massachusetts Peace Action
13. Movement School
14. MoveOn
15. National Children's Campaign
16. Oil Change U.S.
17. Progressive Change Campaign
Committee
18. Progressive Democrats of America
19. Social Security Works
20. Sunrise Movement
21. Sustainable Energy & Economy
Network
22. Take On Wall Street
23. Tax March
24. UltraViolet
25. Working Families Party
26. Zero Hour
27. 350 Action

¹ <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Larry-Summersthe/124790>

² <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2013/09/the-comprehensive-case-against-larry-summers/279651/>

³ <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/11/19/larry-summers-warrens-tax-proposals-nearly-amount-to-confiscation.html>

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/03/washington/03enviro.html>

⁵ <https://business.financialpost.com/commodities/energy/lawrence-summers-comes-out-swinging-for-keystone-xl-at-rotman-talk>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/03/washington/03enviro.html>;

<https://newrepublic.com/article/157459/dont-let-larry-summers-block-climate-progress>

⁶ http://priceofoil.org/content/uploads/2016/09/OCI_the_skys_limit_2016_FINAL_2.pdf;

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brookings-now/2014/09/09/larry-summers-argues-case-for-lifting-the-crude-oil-export-ban/>; <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/videos/2020-04-25/wall-street-week-full-show-04-24-2020-video>

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Summers_memo

⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/21/education/embattled-president-of-harvard-to-step-down-at-end-of-semester.html>; <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-lists/jeffrey-epstein-political-connections-sex-trafficker-856642/lawrence-a-summers-856679/>