



## **Center for Progressive Reform**

### **2025 Strategic Plan**

**December 2021**

## **Introduction**

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The Center for Progressive Reform is at a pivotal moment in its history. As we enter our third decade with a new executive director and a growing staff, board, and budget, we face new challenges and new opportunities on the political and policy horizon. The climate crisis, the weakening state of our governing institutions, and the deep need for racial justice and equity call us to drive meaningful and lasting change on these and other pressing issues of our time.

This plan, requested by the board of directors at its August retreat, lays out CPR's commitments for this historic moment by offering a strategic direction for external focus. It includes mission and vision statements, a brief outline of strategic goals with descriptive language, and an organizational positioning statement and history. It draws on input from scholars, board members, and staff during strategic planning discussions, focus groups, and a survey of roughly 40 members of staff, board, and the scholar network.

## **Mission Statement**

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We harness the power of law and public policy to create a responsive government, a healthy environment, and a just society.

## **Vision Statement**

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We envision a government that uses the full force of its power to curb climate change and ensure a sustainable environment, economic justice, and healthy workplaces and communities for all.

## Strategic Goals

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Achieving meaningful social change requires a strategic commitment to key priorities built and sustained over the long term. This strategic plan outlines our strategic goals over the next three years, from 2022 until 2025 — through the end of President Biden's current term. Each goal embeds racial justice and equity concerns.

### **1. Demand bold and equitable government action in response to the climate crisis.**

We will develop and promote federal and state policies to:

- Reduce the most harmful effects of climate change by ending our dependence on fossil fuels and accelerating our transition to clean energy.
- Strengthen our society's resilience and adaptation to climate change, particularly among communities facing its most dire effects.
- Commit to pursuing equity and justice in response to climate change and as our society transitions to a carbon-free economy.

All nations must take dramatic steps now to limit global heating and stave off environmental catastrophe. At the Center for Progressive Reform, our top priority is pushing our government not only to do its part but to lead the way. We are pressing Congress and the Biden administration to enact and implement a whole-of-government climate agenda and accelerate a just and equitable transition to clean and renewable energy. We are working to prevent and repair climate-induced harm to disenfranchised communities, redress societal inequities, and ensure that all people can fully participate in and benefit from our transition to a carbon-free economy.

### **2. Transform our regulatory system and governing agencies to promote equity while keeping us safe from climate change and other harms.**

We will develop and promote federal and state policies so regulatory systems:

- Put people and our planet ahead of special interests when implementing laws designed to curb climate change, protect public health, and ensure the safety of workers and consumers.
- Protect human life, health, and safety when assessing the effects of rules and regulations; redress historic systemic harms; and center marginalized groups in regulatory decision-making.

- Empower the public by fostering meaningful opportunities for engagement throughout the regulatory process, particularly for those at greatest risk of unregulated hazards.

A robust and responsive regulatory system is crucial to achieving a just America, especially as our climate changes. Unfortunately, our regulatory system *overvalues* cost savings and *undervalues* promoting equity and protecting life, health, and safety. At the Center for Progressive Reform, we push for a regulatory system that fully values human life and health and gives all people meaningful opportunities to shape the policies that affect our lives. Doing so will redistribute political and economic power to the public and create a fairer and more just economy and society as we respond to climate change.

### **3. Protect public and environmental health and safety and our natural resources from climate change and harms caused by pollution, development, and overuse.**

We will develop and promote federal and state policies to:

- Adequately regulate polluting industries to protect workers and the public and ensure they prepare for the hazards of climate change.
- Ensure that industry permits and regulations are enforced and account for cumulative environmental and social stressors in affected communities.
- Focus protections on communities that bear the brunt of extreme heat, more intense storms, floods, wildfires, and other climate-related harms.
- Protect workers from heat stress and other climate hazards.

We are deepening our collaboration with workers and communities harmed by our government's "failure to protect," which exposes workers to illness, injury, and death and communities to toxic pollution and other environmental and climate hazards. Due to a legacy of discriminatory housing and economic policies, low-wealth people of color face disproportionate risk of harm, yet their ideas, experiences, and resilience are overlooked and discounted in law and policy. We are leveraging our expertise in governance and regulatory policy to elevate their concerns and safeguard their life, health, and wellbeing to redress historic environmental racism and prevent further harm as our climate changes.

## **Positioning Statement**

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The Center for Progressive Reform is a nonprofit research and advocacy organization that harnesses the power of law and public policy to create a responsive government, a healthy environment, and a just society. Guided by a national network of legal scholars and professional staff with expertise in governance and regulation, we conduct independent scholarly research and policy analysis, and advocate for effective, collective solutions to our most pressing societal

challenges. We convene policymakers and advocates to shape legislative and agency policy at the state and federal levels, and advance the broad interests of today's social movements for the environment, democracy, and racial justice and equity.

## History and Impact

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The Center for Progressive Reform was founded in 2002 at the behest of legal scholars and advocacy groups seeking to challenge the growing movement against regulatory protections. To counter this movement and reframe the debate, a small group of legal scholars came together to found the Center for Progressive *Regulation*. The center aimed to thwart deregulatory efforts by amplifying independent legal scholarship on the value of regulation and its critical role in protecting people and the planet from harm. In addition, the group developed a proactive regulatory agenda, which was laid out in a 2004 book, [\*A New Progressive Agenda for Public Health and the Environment\*](#), by founding Member Scholars Rena Steinzor and Christopher Schroeder.

The Center for Progressive Reform has since become *the* progressive voice for regulation — and its efforts have a track record of success. Scholars debunked conservative anti-regulatory claims, held briefings on Capitol Hill, testified on regulatory legislation, generated critical analyses and explainers of regulatory issues, and more. Ultimately, this work contributed to the defeat of major anti-regulatory bills in Congress, including the so-called Regulatory Accountability Act, which would have prevented federal agencies from protecting Americans from various harms. If this bill had been law in earlier decades, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), for example, would not have been able to ban lead from gasoline. More recent victories include successful advocacy for a new law protecting tenant access to clean water in Maryland and movement toward stronger EPA protections for people at risk of chemical spills worsened by natural disasters.

The center has expanded staff in policy analysis, operations, and communications; grown its network of scholars; and taken on state-based environmental work in the mid-Atlantic and, most recently, in California. Its scholar network has grown and diversified from a handful of founding scholars to more than 60 prominent professors of law and other disciplines. Its growing portfolio addresses energy, workers' rights, consumer protection, toxins, and a wide range of environmental and other issues. Now entering its third decade, the Center for Progressive Reform is focusing on protecting the public, and particularly marginalized communities, from the harms of climate change, the most pressing issue of our era. Throughout its history, the center has consistently emphasized the power of ideas to drive change, and we will continue to do so in our work for a more just and sustainable world.