




Economic Justice


Guidelines
for Government and Citizenship

a publication of
The Center for Public Justice

- 1** Human beings are created in the image of God with many talents and capabilities that, with maturation and development, make possible the exercise of a wide range of responsibilities—in personal relationships, families, economic enterprises, schools, churches, the media, non-profit organizations, politics, and government.
- 2** Essential to the proper *exercise* of every responsibility is the opportunity to *be responsible*. Oppression or forced marginalization that stifles or destroys a person’s opportunity to exercise responsibility violates human dignity.
- 3** Economic activities, which entail the production and exchange of goods and services, comprise one kind of responsibility. Many economic activities are conducted through for-profit companies and market exchanges.
- 4** In order for both profit-making and not-for-profit activities to flourish, the government of every political community bears responsibility to uphold a just legal framework for recognizing, protecting, and encouraging the full range of human responsibilities. The constitution or basic law of a political community should recognize the dignity of every person and protect the independence of non-government organizations and institutions. Government’s calling is to establish and maintain public justice for the common good.
- 5** Making public room for the independent exercise of profit-making production and exchange is what the Center for Public Justice recognizes and supports as a market economy. Constitutions and laws establish the conditions for such an economy, but government’s responsibility is not confined to the protection of private property and the promotion of market freedom and economic growth. Market economies exist as part of complex societies under public law and increasingly within an international context.
- 6** Since the market itself is part of the public domain, it properly falls to government to establish weights and measures; provide the legal definition of corporations, labor organizations, and property; determine tax and tariff policies; mandate health and safety standards; and guard against restrictive monopolies and other dangers to public health and well-being.
- 7** With the continuing growth of international economic interdependence—and interdependence of many other kinds—governments bear ever-increasing responsibility to work together to build international institutions and protocols that will strengthen justice, including economic justice, among all peoples and states.

For Further Reading

Faith & Economics, a journal of the Association of Christian Economists.

www.gordon.edu/ace/ACEFandE.html

“Toward Civic Justice and Economic Empowerment.”

www.cpjustice.org/files/CPJbooklet_0.pdf

Goudzwaard, Bob. *Globalization and the Kingdom of God*. Baker Book House and Center for Public Justice. 2001.

Kuyper, Abraham. *The Problem of Poverty*. James W. Skillen, ed. Baker Book House and Center for Public Justice. 1991 (1891).

Nelson, Robert H. *Economics as Religion: From Samuelson to Chicago and Beyond*. Penn State University Press. 2001.

For more information, search on this topic at

www.cpjustice.org.

Published by the Center for Public Justice, the Guidelines for Government and Citizenship are papers that:

- Address the nature of political community, the task of government, and the responsibility of citizens.
 - Illustrate how the Center's philosophy expresses itself when applied to a number of key policy areas.
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