### Framework

#### The standard is maximizing expected wellbeing.

#### 1. Only util respects equality by giving the same weight to all- side constraints unduly favor those *directly harmed*. They also freeze actions since states *always violate some rights*, have no unified intention, and all actions have some non-zero risk of violating a side-constraint.

#### 2. The social contract requires states *maximize utility* since they’re responsible to their citizenry. No AOD or IFD- govt’s have to *permit* and *prohibit* so inaction is an action. Calc possible- indicts only prove hard, *not impossible*; empirically false; and, should be rejected cause they’re functionally NIBs.

#### 3. Degrees of wrongness- if I break a promise to meet up for lunch, it’s *not as bad* as breaking a promise to take a *dying person* to the hospital- only consequences explain why the second one is *much worse* than the first.

#### 4. Disregarding material violence is a form of abstraction that reifies concrete structures of domination; moral absolutism is epistemically suspect and justifies complicity in oppression- threats to security preclude the *moral idealism* presupposed by other theories and life is a prerequisite to their impacts.

#### 5. Extinction outweighs *under any framework*- moral uncertainty and future gens.

Pummer 15 — (Theron Pummer, Junior Research Fellow in Philosophy at St. Anne's College, University of Oxford, “Moral Agreement on Saving the World,” Practical Ethics University of Oxford, 5-18-2015, Available Online at http://blog.practicalethics.ox.ac.uk/2015/05/moral-agreement-on-saving-the-world/, accessed 7-2-2018, HKR-AM) \*\*we do not endorse ableist language=

There appears to be lot of disagreement in moral philosophy. Whether these many apparent disagreements are deep and irresolvable, I believe there is at least one thing it is reasonable to agree on right now, whatever general moral view we adopt: that it is very important to reduce the risk that all intelligent beings on this planet are eliminated by an enormous catastrophe, such as a nuclear war. How we might in fact try to reduce such existential risks is discussed elsewhere. My claim here is only that we – whether we’re consequentialists, deontologists, or virtue ethicists – should all agree that we should try to save the world. According to consequentialism, we should maximize the good, where this is taken to be the goodness, from an impartial perspective, of outcomes. Clearly one thing that makes an outcome good is that the people in it are doing well. There is little disagreement here. If the happiness or well-being of possible future people is just as important as that of people who already exist, and if they would have good lives, it is not hard to see how reducing existential risk is easily the most important thing in the whole world. This is for the familiar reason that there are so many people who could exist in the future – there are trillions upon trillions… upon trillions. There are so many possible future people that reducing existential risk is arguably the most important thing in the world, even if the well-being of these possible people were given only 0.001% as much weight as that of existing people. Even on a wholly person-affecting view – according to which there’s nothing (apart from effects on existing people) to be said in favor of creating happy people – the case for reducing existential risk is very strong. As noted in this seminal paper, this case is strengthened by the fact that there’s a good chance that many existing people will, with the aid of life-extension technology, live very long and very high quality lives. You might think what I have just argued applies to consequentialists only. There is a tendency to assume that, if an argument appeals to consequentialist considerations (the goodness of outcomes), it is irrelevant to non-consequentialists. But that is a huge mistake. Non-consequentialism is the view that there’s more that determines rightness than the goodness of consequences or outcomes; it is not the view that the latter don’t matter. Even John Rawls wrote, “All ethical doctrines worth our attention take consequences into account in judging rightness. One which did not would simply be irrational, crazy.” Minimally plausible versions of deontology and virtue ethics must be concerned in part with promoting the good, from an impartial point of view. They’d thus imply very strong reasons to reduce existential risk, at least when this doesn’t significantly involve doing harm to others or damaging one’s character. What’s even more surprising, perhaps, is that even if our own good (or that of those near and dear to us) has much greater weight than goodness from the impartial “point of view of the universe,” indeed even if the latter is entirely morally irrelevant, we may nonetheless have very strong reasons to reduce existential risk. Even egoism, the view that each agent should maximize her own good, might imply strong reasons to reduce existential risk. It will depend, among other things, on what one’s own good consists in. If well-being consisted in pleasure only, it is somewhat harder to argue that egoism would imply strong reasons to reduce existential risk – perhaps we could argue that one would maximize her expected hedonic well-being by funding life extension technology or by having herself cryogenically frozen at the time of her bodily death as well as giving money to reduce existential risk (so that there is a world for her to live in!). I am not sure, however, how strong the reasons to do this would be. But views which imply that, if I don’t care about other people, I have no or very little reason to help them are not even minimally plausible views (in addition to hedonistic egoism, I here have in mind views that imply that one has no reason to perform an act unless one actually desires to do that act). To be minimally plausible, egoism will need to be paired with a more sophisticated account of well-being. To see this, it is enough to consider, as Plato did, the possibility of a ring of invisibility – suppose that, while wearing it, Ayn could derive some pleasure by helping the poor, but instead could derive just a bit more by severely harming them. Hedonistic egoism would absurdly imply she should do the latter. To avoid this implication, egoists would need to build something like the meaningfulness of a life into well-being, in some robust way, where this would to a significant extent be a function of other-regarding concerns (see chapter 12 of this classic intro to ethics). But once these elements are included, we can (roughly, as above) argue that this sort of egoism will imply strong reasons to reduce existential risk. Add to all of this Samuel Scheffler’s recent intriguing arguments (quick podcast version available here) that most of what makes our lives go well would be undermined if there were no future generations of intelligent persons. On his view, my life would contain vastly less well-being if (say) a year after my death the world came to an end. So obviously if Scheffler were right I’d have very strong reason to reduce existential risk. We should also take into account moral uncertainty. What is it reasonable for one to do, when one is uncertain not (only) about the empirical facts, but also about the moral facts? I’ve just argued that there’s agreement among minimally plausible ethical views that we have strong reason to reduce existential risk – not only consequentialists, but also deontologists, virtue ethicists, and sophisticated egoists should agree. But even those (hedonistic egoists) who disagree should have a significant level of confidence that they are mistaken, and that one of the above views is correct. Even if they were 90% sure that their view is the correct one (and 10% sure that one of these other ones is correct), they would have pretty strong reason, from the standpoint of moral uncertainty, to reduce existential risk. Perhaps most disturbingly still, even if we are only 1% sure that the well-being of possible future people matters, it is at least arguable that, from the standpoint of moral uncertainty, reducing existential risk is the most important thing in the world. Again, this is largely for the reason that there are so many people who could exist in the future – there are trillions upon trillions… upon trillions. (For more on this and other related issues, see this excellent dissertation). Of course, it is uncertain whether these untold trillions would, in general, have good lives. It’s possible they’ll be miserable. It is enough for my claim that there is moral agreement in the relevant sense if, at least given certain empirical claims about what future lives would most likely be like, all minimally plausible moral views would converge on the conclusion that we should try to save the world. While there are some non-crazy views that place significantly greater moral weight on avoiding suffering than on promoting happiness, for reasons others have offered (and for independent reasons I won’t get into here unless requested to), they nonetheless seem to be fairly implausible views. And even if things did not go well for our ancestors, I am optimistic that they will overall go fantastically well for our descendants, if we allow them to. I suspect that most of us alive today – at least those of us not suffering from extreme illness or poverty – have lives that are well worth living, and that things will continue to improve. Derek Parfit, whose work has emphasized future generations as well as agreement in ethics, described our situation clearly and accurately: “We live during the hinge of history. Given the scientific and technological discoveries of the last two centuries, the world has never changed as fast. We shall soon have even greater powers to transform, not only our surroundings, but ourselves and our successors. If we act wisely in the next few centuries, humanity will survive its most dangerous and decisive period. Our descendants could, if necessary, go elsewhere, spreading through this galaxy…. Our descendants might, I believe, make the further future very good. But that good future may also depend in part on us. If our selfish recklessness ends human history, we would be acting very wrongly.” (From chapter 36 of On What Matters)

### Collapse to util

1. The veil collapses to util, three reasons
   1. We wouldn't rationally consent on any given rule if it didn't end up being beneficial, so it collapses to util since that promotes equality and wellbeing for everyone
   2. Consequences are the knowledge we know behind the veil because those are the only relevant facts that are impartial to individual bias- without states of affairs we have no knowledge under the veil, so it’s non functional
   3. Util accounts for all perspectives, meaning it incorporates the knowledge necessary to guide action that is lacking under the veil- this weighs each person's interests equally
2. Wrong starting point: Rawls assumes a conception of an ideal agent behind the veil, which is impossible since there is no empirical basis for such an agent- physical realism precludes your framework. Even if one could exist a priori, there’s no consensus on how those people would deliberate under the veil without appealing to a prior framework, which means the veil is circular and nonfunctional. Util doesn’t assume such prior facts since it appeals to physical experience.

### General

1. The veil is circular. Contractors under the veil must create morality based upon prior reasons, but these reasons can only come from the contractual process itself. **Shafer-Landau 03**

Russ Shafer-Landau, Moral Realism: A Defence, Clarendon Press, Oxford. 2003.

If this is sounding a familiar note, it should. The dilemma pressed against the constructivist is a variation of one ﬁrst found in the Euthyphro. There, the question was whether divine approval constituted the piety of acts, or whether it was simply a good criterion of such acts, their pious nature being constituted by something else. Plato chose the latter option, because the former made divine approval arbitrary, thereby undercutting the goodness of the gods. If the attitudes of idealized agents are worthy to ﬁx moral truth—if the agents are good in the relevant respect—then these attitudes must be developed in response to reasons. But then the reasons come ﬁrst. So if constructivism is to avoid dignifying the arbitrary choices of idealized agents, and if it is to avoid lapsing into realism, then it must insist that these choices are exemplary because of having been for met through exceptional attentiveness to non-moral reasons. But if the reasons that are constraining the choices of the favoured agents are not moral reasons, it is hard to see why the outcomes of the initial conditions should be deﬁnitive of morality.

1. Rawls misunderstands the nature of moral deliberation. Rawls assumes that contractors can come to a consensus on moral rules, but that’s impossible without an external standard. **Pickett 98**

Brent Pickett, Chadron State College, “Sandel, Ontology, and Advocacy,” The Political Science Reviewer, Vol.27 (Winter, 1998)

Rawls' atomism also affects his understanding of how a self chooses its ends. Sandel argues that **the Rawlsian self, bounded in advance, has *as* its central question, "What shall I choose?" rather than "Who am I?**"*(LLJ, 153).*It merely attends to its needs and desires, weighing their relative intensity, and choosing on that basis. Sandel calls this description of the agent, which emphasizes choice and the will, the voluntarist account of agency. **It does not allow the Rawlsian subject to have second-order desires, or desires about desires.** For instance, I may wish that I had more courage or self-discipline. In such moments I am reflecting about what sort of desires I should have, and in doing so I am raising questions about who I am and who I should be. Since Rawls only allows for a subject assessing her own desires, and not reflecting upon the quality of those desires, Rawls' understanding of deliberation rules out second-order desires and is thus an impoverished conception of moral deliberation. Also, for Rawls one person cannot feel another's needs and desires and know their intensity; one can only guess at such things. Hence, for Rawls we are self-transparent, but for epistemological reasons we are largely opaque to one another. In turn this affects how we can speak to one another, even the persons to whom we are closest. Due to the limits of our knowledge of others, we can only take the role of advisors. Since I cannot know what another person feels, but she is self-transparent, I am poorly situated to tell her that her course of action will end up badly for her, perhaps because it will take her away from what she genuinely wants but does not realize she wants.

### NC – Econ DA

#### Business recovery is strong. Business confidence is high.

**Halloran ’9-14** [Michael; 2021; M.B.A. from Carnegie Mellon University, former aerospace research engineer, Equity Strategist; Janney, “Despite Potential Headwinds, Key Labor Market Indicators Bode Well for the Economy,” https://www.janney.com/latest-articles-commentary/all-insights/insights/2021/09/14/despite-potential-headwinds-key-labor-market-indicators-bode-well-for-the-economy]

However, we **remain encouraged** by the recovery that has been unfolding since the economy began reopening. We continue to see improvement in important cyclical sectors of the economy while consumers are **historically healthy** and **still have pent-up demand**. Business confidence has **rebounded** with **strong corporate profits** that should support **further capital spending and hiring** (there are **now more job openings** than there are unemployed people by a **record amount**).

We expect to see **further improvement** in the international backdrop, supported by **unprecedented fiscal and monetary stimulus** and **accelerating rates of vaccination**. Although the impact of the Delta wave is still being felt, **recent evidence** confirms the effectiveness of vaccines in limiting deaths and hospitalizations. With the pace of vaccination now picking up in the areas most impacted by this wave—Asia and Australia—the case for fading headwinds leading to improving economic growth later this year remains positive.

The signals from **financial markets** themselves remain **positive**. Despite consolidating last week, stocks remain **near record highs** while the 10-year Treasury remains well above the **lows of earlier this summer** when concerns about Delta first emerged.

These factors support our view of a **durable economic recovery** from the pandemic that should continue supporting stock prices. A healthy labor market is a critical element for a sustainable recovery that supports profit growth and last week’s news from the labor market remains encouraging.

#### Unions devastate growth and worsen inequality – gains for workers shift costs to other parts of the economy

**Epstein 20** [Richard A. Epstein Peter and Kirsten Bedford Senior Fellow @ the Hoover Institution. "The Decline Of Unions Is Good News." https://www.hoover.org/research/decline-unions-good-news]

This continued trend has elicited howls of protest from union supporters who, of course, want to see an increase in union **membership**. It has also led several Democratic presidential candidates to make calls to reconfigure labor law. Bernie Sanders wants to double union membership and give federal workers the **right to strike**, as well as ban at-will contracts of employment, so that any dismissal could be subject to litigation under a “for cause” standard. Not to be outdone, Elizabeth Warren wants to make it illegal for firms to hire permanent replacements for striking workers. They are joined by Pete Buttigieg in demanding a change in federal labor law so that states may no longer pass right-to-work laws that insulate workers from the requirement to pay union dues in unionized firms. All of these new devices are **proven job killers**.

The arguments in favor of **unions** are also coming from some unexpected sources in academia, where a conservative case has been put forward on the ground that an increase in union membership is **needed** to combat job insecurity and **economic inequality**.

All of these pro-union critiques miss the **basic point** that the **decline** of union power is **good news**, not bad. That conclusion is driven not by some insidious effort to **stifle** the **welfare** of workers, but by the simple and profound point that the greatest **protection** for workers lies in a **competitive economy** that opens up more doors than it closes. The only way to achieve that result is by **slashing** the various **restrictions** that prevent job formation, as Justin Haskins of the Heartland Institute notes in a recent article at The Hill. The central economic insight is that jobs get created only when there is the prospect of gains from trade. Those gains in turn are **maximized** by cutting the multitude of **regulations** and **taxes** that do nothing more than shrink overall wealth by directing social resources to less **productive ends**.

#### Unions crush competitiveness

**Griswold 10** [Daniel is Director of the Center for Trade Policy Studies at the Cato Institute “Unions, Protectionism, and U.S.Competitiveness” Cato Journal, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Winter 2010). P 181-195]

While globalization has affected labor unions in surprising ways, unions have also had a measurable effect on the ability of firms to compete in the global economy. The 1984 publication of What Do Unions Do?,by Freeman and Medoff, launched a growing body of research into the effects of labor unions on the performance of unionized firms compared to nonunionized firms. The evidence indicates that unions and globalization are **not a happy mix** for companies with unionized workforces.¶ Freeman and Medoff noted in their landmark work that the impact of unions on the workplace reveals itself in two faces, a “monopoly face,” which tends to reduce the efficiency of the affected firm, and the “collective voice/institutional response face,” which can raise productivity by encouraging worker loyalty and reducing turnover.¶ The monopoly face of unions can be seen in their efforts to fix wages and benefits at levels above those of a competitive labor market. A labor union is, among other things, a **cartel** or monopoly that attempts to exert market power to extract a higher price for the labor it offers to a firm. Like monopolies in product markets, the result can be a **misallocation** of resources. Higher wages cut into firm profits, reducing **investment** and **employment** levels in the affected industry. Unions can also impose **restrictive work rules** and **featherbedding** that reduce **productivity** and **stifle innovation**. An emphasis on **seniority over merit** in pay and promotion can reduce the incentive for **worker effort.** One result can be the inability of management to respond in a timely way to changing market conditions, putting the firm at a **competitive disadvantage**. **Strikes** and other industrial action can damage a firm’s ability to retain market share.¶ On the positive side, as summarized in Bennett and Kaufman (2008: 3), unions can reduce worker turnover and increase their sense of loyalty to the firm, thus reducing transaction costs to the firm for hiring and training. The effect is consistent with the efficient- wage theory, which argues that paying workers an above-market wage can yield benefits to the firm that more than offset higher payroll costs. The protection of a union can empower individual workers to suggest workplace improvements, exercising the option for “voice” rather than “exit.” The organizing of a union can shock management into organizing production more efficiently to maintain competitiveness. Unions can enhance the representation of older, more experienced workers rather than allowing wages and benefits to be determined by more mobile, “marginal” workers who tend to be younger and single.¶ Freeman and Medoff came to the conclusion in their influential book that the voice/representational face of organized labor tends to predominate the monopoly face, with the result that unions on balance play a positive role in enhancing the output and competitiveness of unionized firms. Twenty-five years later, however, the evidence does not support their more optimistic view of the impact of organized labor on the competitiveness of U.S. companies in the global markets.

#### Recessions cause global crises – ensuring continued growth is key

**Baird ’20** [Zoe; October 2020; C.E.O. and President of the Markle Foundation, Member of the Aspen Strategy Group and former Trustee at the Council on Foreign Relations, J.D. and A.B. from the University of California at Berkeley; Domestic and International (Dis)order: A Strategic Response, “Equitable Economic Recovery is a National Security Imperative,” Ch. 13]

A strong and inclusive economy is **essential** for American **national security** and **global leadership**. As the nation seeks to return from a historic economic crisis, the national security community should support an equitable recovery that helps every worker adapt to the **seismic shifts** underway in our economy.

Broadly shared economic prosperity is a **bedrock** of America’s **economic** and **political strength**—both **domestically** and in the **international** arena. A **strong** and **equitable** recovery from the economic crisis created by COVID-19 would be a **powerful testament** to the **resilience** of the American system and its **ability to create prosperity** at a time of **seismic change** and persistent **global crisis**. Such a recovery could attack the profound economic inequities that have developed over the past several decades. Without **bold action** to help all workers access good jobs as the economy returns, the **U**nited **S**tates risks **undermining** the **legitimacy of its institutions** and its **international standing**. The **outcome** will be a **key determinant** of America’s **national security** for years to come.

An equitable recovery requires a national commitment to help all workers obtain good jobs—particularly the two-thirds of adults without a bachelor’s degree and people of color who have been most affected by the crisis and were denied opportunity before it. As the nation engages in a historic debate about how to accelerate economic recovery, ambitious public investment is necessary to put Americans back to work with dignity and opportunity. We need an intentional effort to make sure that the jobs that come back are good jobs with decent wages, benefits, and mobility and to empower workers to access these opportunities in a profoundly changed labor market.

To achieve these goals, **America**n policy makers need to establish **job growth strategies** that address **urgent public needs** through **major programs** in green energy, infrastructure, and health. Alongside these job growth strategies, we need to recognize and develop the talents of workers by creating an adult learning system that meets workers’ needs and develops skills for the digital economy. The national security community must lend its support to this cause. And as it does so, it can bring home the lessons from the advances made in these areas in other countries, particularly our European allies, and consider this a realm of international cooperation and international engagement.

Shared Economic Prosperity Is a National Security Asset

A **strong economy** is **essential** to America’s **security and diplomatic strategy**. Economic strength increases our **influence** on the global stage, **expands markets**, and **funds** a **strong and agile military** and **national defense**. Yet it is not enough for America’s economy to be strong for some—prosperity must be broadly shared. **Widespread belief** in the ability of the American **economic system** to create economic security and mobility for all—the American Dream— creates **credibility** and **legitimacy** for America’s **values**, **governance**, and **alliances** around the world.

After World War II, the **U**nited **S**tates grew the middle class to historic size and strength. This achievement made America the **model** of the free world—**setting the stage** for decades of American political and economic **leadership**. Domestically, broad participation in the economy is **core** to the **legitimacy** of our democracy and the strength of our political institutions. A belief that the economic system works for millions is an important part of creating trust in a democratic government’s ability to meet the needs of the people.

The COVID-19 Crisis Puts Millions of American Workers at Risk

For the last several decades, the American Dream has been on the wane. Opportunity has been increasingly concentrated in the hands of a small share of workers able to access the knowledge economy. Too many Americans, particularly those without four-year degrees, experienced stagnant wages, less stability, and fewer opportunities for advancement.

Since COVID-19 hit, millions have lost their jobs or income and are struggling to meet their basic needs—including food, housing, and medical care.1 The crisis has impacted sectors like hospitality, leisure, and retail, which employ a large share of America’s most economically vulnerable workers, resulting in alarming disparities in unemployment rates along education and racial lines. In August, the unemployment rate for those with a high school degree or less was more than double the rate for those with a bachelor’s degree.2 Black and Hispanic Americans are experiencing disproportionately high unemployment, with the gulf widening as the crisis continues.3

The experience of the Great Recession shows that without intentional effort to drive an inclusive recovery, inequality may get worse: while workers with a high school education or less experienced the majority of job losses, nearly all new jobs went to workers with postsecondary education. Inequalities across racial lines also increased as workers of color worked in the hardest-hit sectors and were slower to recover earnings and income than White workers.4

The Case for an Inclusive Recovery

A recovery that promotes broad economic participation, renewed opportunity, and equity will strengthen American moral and political authority **around the world**. It will **send a strong message** about the strength and **resilience** of **democratic government** and the American people’s **ability to adapt** to a changing global economic landscape. An inclusive recovery will reaffirm American leadership as core to the success of our most critical international alliances, which are rooted in the notion of shared destiny and interdependence. For example, NATO, which has been a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy and a force of global stability for decades, has suffered from American disengagement in recent years. A strong American recovery—coupled with a renewed openness to international collaboration—is core to **NATO’s ability** to solve **shared geopolitical and security challenges**. A renewed partnership with our European allies from a **position of economic strength** will enable us to address **global crises** such as **climate change**, **global pandemics**, and **refugees**. Together, the United States and Europe can pursue a commitment to investing in workers for shared economic competitiveness, innovation, and long-term prosperity.

The U.S. has **unique advantages** that give it the **tools** to emerge from the crisis with **tremendous economic strength**— including an entrepreneurial spirit and the technological and scientific infrastructure to lead global efforts in developing industries like green energy and biosciences that will shape the international economy for decades to come.

Case

#### Unions don’t solve inequality – they’re too weak and tons of alt causes

**Epstein 20** [Richard A. Epstein Peter and Kirsten Bedford Senior Fellow @ the Hoover Institution. "The Decline Of Unions Is Good News." https://www.hoover.org/research/decline-unions-good-news]

So what then could justify this inefficient provision? One common argument is that unions help **reduce** the level of income **inequality** by offering union members a high **living wage**, as seen in the golden age of the 1950s. But that argument **misfires** on several fronts. Those high union wages could not survive in the face of **foreign competition** or new nonunionized firms. The only way a union can provide gains for its members is to extract some fraction of the profits that firms enjoy when they hold monopoly positions.

When **tariff barriers** are **lowered** and domestic markets are **deregulated**, as with the airlines and telecommunications industries, the size of union gains go down. Thus the sharp decline in union membership from 35 percent in both 1945 and 1954 to about 15 percent in 1985 led to no substantial increase in the fraction of wealth earned by the top 10 percent of the economy during that period. However, the income share of the top ten percent rose to about 40 percent over the next 15 years as union membership fell to below 10 percent by 2000.

But don’t be fooled—that **5 percent change** in union **membership** cannot drive widespread **inequality** for the entire **population**, which is also affected by a rise in the **knowledge econ**omy as well as a general **aging** of the population. The far more powerful distributive effects are likely to be those from **nonunion workers** whose job prospects within a given firm have been **compromised** by **higher wages** to union workers.

It is **even less clear** that the proposals of progressives like Sanders, Warren, and Buttigieg to **revamp** the **labor rules** would **reverse** the decline of unions. Not only is the American labor market more **competitive**, but the work place is no longer dominated by large industrial assembly lines where workers remain in their same position for years. Today, workforces are far more heterogeneous and labor turnover is far higher. It is therefore much more difficult for a union to organize a common front among workers with divergent interests.

Employers, too, have become much more adept at **resisting** unionization in ways that no set of **labor laws can capture**. It is no accident that plants are built in states like Tennessee and Mississippi, and that facilities are designed in ways to make it more difficult to **picket** or **shut down**. None of these defensive maneuvers would be necessary if, as I have long advocated, firms could post notices announcing that they will not hire union members, as they could do before the passage of the NLRA.

#### No inequality crisis – studies exaggerate the risk

**Wright** et al **19** [Joshua D. Wright is University Professor and the Executive Director of the Global Antitrust Institute at Scalia Law School at George Mason University. Professor Wright also holds a courtesy appointment in the Department of Economics. In 2013, the Senate unanimously confirmed Professor Wright as a member of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), following his nomination by President Obama. He rejoined Scalia Law School as a full-time faculty member in Fall 2015. "Consumer Welfare & the Rule of Law: The Case Against the New Populist Antitrust Movement." https://regproject.org/paper/consumer-welfare-the-rule-of-law-the-case-against-the-new-populist-antitrust-movement/]

Examining household consumption trends tells a similar story. Scholars have argued that consumption might be a superior measure of welfare, given a “closer link between **consumption** and **well-being**.”87 Consumption trends would also seem to be relevant when considering **antitrust enforcement** efforts, as they offer more information regarding economic effects than isolated income or wealth measurements. Examining household consumption over the last couple decades indicates that inequality is increasing but at a **muted rate**.

Accordingly, the evidence does seem to indicate inequality is increasing by some amount. Potentially **more-accurate** measures of income and welfare, however, suggest this trend is not as significant as populists claim. So, the first assumption in this particular populist theory appears to be valid, if often overstated. That leads us to the second—and for this discussion, the critical—assumption that antitrust enforcement is driving the apparent inequality trend.

#### Wages high and rising

Patti **Domm 21**—CNBC Markets Editor. (“Workers’ wages are rising at the fastest pace in years. Companies’ profits could take a hit,” May 22, 2021, from CNBC, https://www.cnbc.com/2021/05/22/wages-rise-at-the-fastest-pace-in-years-firms-profits-could-take-a-hit.html)

Workers are **getting higher wages**, but at some point that could bite into companies’ profits.

As the economy reopens, costs are climbing for everything from packaging and raw materials to shipping. In addition to these expenses, companies are also paying more to get workers to come in the door.

But the disparity between labor costs and profits has been so wide for so long, that employers should be able to increase pay if they can raise prices for goods and services or improve productivity.

McDonald’s said last week that it was boosting wages for the 36,500 hourly workers at company-owned stores by 10%, and Chipotle announced it will raise wages to an average of $15 an hour by the end of June. Bank of America said it would raise minimum wages for its hourly workers to $25 an hour, from the current $20, by 2025.

Sports equipment company Under Armour also announced it would boost the minimum hourly wage for its retail and distribution workers to $15 from $10.

“It’s some of the **strongest wage growth we’ve seen in a quarter century**,” said Mark Zandi, Moody’s Analytics chief economist. He said the **3% wage growth for private workers** in the first quarter was the **strongest since the 1990s** and **productivity has picked up** at the same time.

“All the anecdotes we were getting in the last few months would suggest it’s **continuing**,” he said.