



## Andrew Yang: Presidential Candidate Promises 'Enlightened Technocracy'

Yang is a mix of Libertarian and Democrat who is appealing to both camps. An 'enlightened technocracy' is comparable to Dr. Parag Khanna's 'direct technocracy' as proposed in *Technocracy in America* (2015). Yang promotes Universal Basic Income, Smart Meters, Medicare for all, carbon fees and legalization of drugs. □ TN Editor

Andrew Yang, a 44-year-old affable technocrat, is leading a rather whimsical presidential run, fused with [a litany of policy proposals](#) tackling every aspect of American life. His policies include renovating abandoned malls as new public spaces, limiting smartphone use among children, reviving earmarks in the legislative process, making community college affordable and [paying Americans](#) who are moving to new areas for jobs. With his new, cutting-edge brand of politics, Yang could be the perfect antidote to our toxic status quo which feeds on cynicism, contempt, tribalism and above all dysfunction.

Yang's overarching message of positivity, compassion and concrete

policy making would be a welcome disruption to Washington's refusal to address the nation's gripping challenges regarding healthcare, education and climate change. In other words, Yang combines the best aspects of personality with policy chops, a valuable mix for a presidential contender.

Yang has weighed in on all sorts of topics one would not expect to hear from a conventional candidate, from [free marriage counseling](#) to free HBO accounts to rally the country around Game of Thrones. Then again, Mr. Yang is not conventional at all. As an entrepreneur, Yang created over 2,500 jobs in American cities suffering from the 2008 financial crisis. He then realized that the existential threat fueling poverty and wealth inequality was automation, a problem which job creation on its own could not handle. He subsequently built his political campaign on a central message: universal basic income. That means \$1,000 per month for every American adult. Period.

Universal basic income may sound unfathomable. Surely, subsidizing nearly 300 million people every month is too ambitious? Not so, Yang argues. Paying for this program would be realized through a value-added tax on companies like Amazon, which he points out has paid no federal tax even as the corporate giant, the second largest US-based employer in 2017, is at, "the forefront of automation," according to [Nick Wingfield](#) of the New York Times.

While Amazon is creating new jobs at warehouses for those displaced by robots, many suspect this trend cannot continue indefinitely as robots grow increasingly intelligent and capable of performing increasingly complex tasks. In describing the trend of job creation at Amazon, futurist Martin Ford stated, "My assumption is this technology will eventually displace a lot of people in those warehouses. I would not say that overnight huge numbers of jobs disappear. Maybe the first indication is they don't get rid of those people, but the pace of job creation slows down."

Surely companies like Amazon, Facebook and Google can find some extra cash lying around in an era of hyper-charged inequality and record profits? Alphabet, the parent company of Google, holds \$80 billion in

cash reserves, enough to buy Goldman Sachs. That figure rises to [\\$1.9 trillion](#) for all businesses. However, unlike in previous eras, corporations have very little incentive to invest their excess cash in the economy today in expanding business operations or creating new jobs. A value-added tax on Silicon Valley to fund universal basic income would simply be the government stepping in to make crucial investments in America that entities like Amazon, Google, Facebook and Uber currently seem unwilling to make.

Andrew Yang also points out that a value added tax is hardly radical, considering all other advanced economies have it in some form. [His proposal](#), “at even half the European level would generate over \$800 billion in new revenue.” If you still thought UBI was too extreme, because it has never been tried before, Yang points to Alaska, where every state resident receives \$1,000-\$2,000 per year from the state’s massive oil revenues. Furthermore, experiments with universal basic income in Finland [are looking positive](#), where recipients of free money reported increased happiness and trust in social institutions.

At its core a value added tax, “[would give the people](#) a tiny sliver of every Amazon sale, every Google search, every robot truck mile.” Yang stresses this policy makes sense since the emerging tech economy will be increasingly designed to create a tiny handful of winners and economically harm the rest of society.

Those who believe that the free market is sacrosanct may be reeling right now, seeing such a proposal as brazen socialism. Yang wholeheartedly disagrees. As an entrepreneur he deeply respects what the free market can accomplish, and unlike his rivals like Senator Bernie Sanders, he embraces the capitalist label. At the same time, he recognizes that our current system of extreme turbo charged wealth inequality is poorly equipped to address the mounting problems average Americans will face in the coming decades. Yang, in short, is a fervent, passionate advocate for what he calls, “humane capitalism.”

This “humane capitalism” goes off in many dimensions beyond universal basic income. Yang supports a “[GDP for the 21<sup>st</sup> century](#).” Mirroring the [UN Human Development Index](#), Yang’s GDP would look at critical

aspects we as humans value beyond money, including clean environment, childhood well being and mental health.

If implemented, Yang's proposals would be transformative for the broad base of our society. They would resemble a fundamental rethinking of our relationship to the US economy, which is currently at record GDP growth and record low unemployment, even as the working to middle class and young people suffer under soaring housing and healthcare costs and mounting private debt.

I mentioned Yang presented himself as an affable candidate, and I cannot overstate how much of a relief his personality contrasts with our divisive, angry political landscape. Most of us are tired of a president who is obsessed with benefiting his hardcore base of 30% of the electorate and directing their ire against the rest of the country. Yang has repeatedly stressed he wants to run a campaign of positivity, respect and outreach toward all Americans. Indeed, he has successfully [conducted outreach](#) to supporters of President Trump. He doesn't view the middle of the country as uneducated, racist rubes like many of our nation's elites do. Instead, he views them, along with most Americans, as disadvantaged by the current economy, and in need of a helping hand. I find that philosophy nothing short of inspiring.

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