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*Democracy Dies in Darkness*

## ECONOMIC POLICY

# Main Street takes on monetary policy, Round 2



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Main Street plans to take on the maestros of monetary policy today, armed with a list of demands aimed at prolonging central bank stimulus and increasing public input.

The campaign has been dubbed “[Fed Up](#)” and is made up of 20 community and labor groups, ranging from the Missourians Organizing for Reform and Empowerment to the behemoth AFL-CIO. The groups plans to demonstrate in front of the Federal Reserve’s august headquarters on Constitution Avenue on Friday morning. They are slated to present their proposals to Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen in a meeting scheduled for this afternoon.

“The point is to start a public conversation and include more voices in it,” said Ady Barkan, staff attorney at the Center for Popular Democracy, one of the groups leading the effort.

Still, debates over macroeconomics can quickly turn wonky. Among the campaign’s requests are for the Fed to reconsider its 2 percent target for inflation and for the central bank to start purchasing municipal bonds to jumpstart local infrastructure projects -- issues that typically don’t come up at the water cooler.

But several other proposals strike a more populist note. The groups says the Fed should wait until there is a significant reduction in the gap in unemployment rate of black and white workers, as well as an increase in the number of women in the force, before it decides to raise interest rates. The coalition also wants the Fed to conduct research on the impact of progressive economic policy proposals -- namely raising the minimum wage and requiring paid sick leave.

Finally, it is seeking time for public comment during the central bank’s policy meetings and a more inclusive process for appointing officials at the Fed’s regional banks.

In some ways, the campaign's effort coincides with the central bank's goals. Under former Chairman Ben S. Bernanke, the Fed dramatically increased transparency. It now holds regular press conferences, publishes detailed economic forecasts and attempts to communicate its policy positions.

Current Fed Chair Janet Yellen has made a particular effort to connect monetary policy to Main Street. She recounted the personal stories of struggling workers during a speech in Chicago early this year and visited a jobs training center in Boston last month. She has cited the elevated unemployment rate for African Americans several times as evidence that the nation's broader economic recovery may not be deeply rooted.

"The recovery still feels like a recession to many Americans, and it also looks that way in some economic statistics," Yellen said in her Chicago speech.

The Fed also already produces a vast array of research on domestic policy issues. In fact, progressive groups - including at least one involved in the campaign -- frequently cite a study by the Chicago Fed as evidence that raising the minimum wage can boost incomes and spur consumer spending.

Barkan said the campaign is intended to be a counterpoint to the vocal minority of Fed officials who have been calling for the central bank to raise rates soon in response to the improving economy. But even officials counseling patience are not going far enough, Barkan said.

"There's a lot in there that the Fed has yet to do," he said. "We want them to be bold and ambitious in their effort to improve the economy."

Friday will mark the second time demonstrators have confronted Fed officials. This summer, the group traveled to the Kansas City Fed's annual conference in Jackson Hole, Wyo., an invite-only affair that draws some of the world's most powerful economic policymakers. The protest was the first time since the 1980s that there has been a grassroots response to monetary policy decisions.