

THE GREEN NEW DEAL: A SYNOPSIS

By Clifford Burke

The Green New Deal is a House Resolution now before Congress that lays out the realities of the climate crisis we face, as well as inequities and political hindrances that prevent the massive kind of movement necessary to address this crisis.

But what I want to do here is separate out the listing of positive steps that Congress is being urged to take to put us on a daring new path toward climate health, human security and opportunity, and economic justice. Most of the text is taken verbatim from the Resolution, but removed from the structure of legislative language.

The Green New Deal recognizes that to achieve its goals, the United States must mobilize on a scale not seen since World War II. Here are the steps the Green New Deal proposes to bring disastrous climate change down to tolerable levels, and in the process create millions of good, high-wage jobs in the United States, provide unprecedented levels of prosperity and economic security for all our people, and counteract existing systemic injustices.

THE BROAD PICTURE

It is the duty of the Federal Government to create a Green New Deal, to achieve zero and net-zero greenhouse gas emissions through a fair and just transition for all communities and workers; to create millions of good, high-wage jobs and ensure prosperity and economic security for all people of the United States; and to invest in the infrastructure and industry of the United States to sustainably meet the challenges of the 21st century.

It is the intent of these transitions to secure for ours and future generations clean air and water, climate and community resiliency; healthy food; access to nature; and a sustainable environment. At the same time, to promote justice and equity, the Green New Deal must stop the oppression of indigenous peoples, communities of color, migrant communities, de-industrialized communities, depopulated rural communities, the poor, low-income workers, women, the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth.

SPECIFIC GOALS AND PROJECTS / INFRASTRUCTURE

The repair and upgrading of infrastructure is of primary importance in meeting the crisis of climate change. As a preliminary, it is vital to ensure that any infrastructure bill considered by Congress addresses climate change.

It is important to begin building resiliency against climate change-related disasters, such as extreme weather, including by leveraging funding and providing investments for community-defined projects and strategies. These should include reducing the risks posed by climate impacts, eliminating pollution and greenhouse gas emissions as much as technologically feasible, and guaranteeing universal access to clean water.

Energy infrastructure must be upgraded to begin meeting 100 percent of the power demand in the United States through clean, renewable, and zero-emission energy sources, including by dramatically expanding and upgrading renewable power sources and by deploying new capacity. We must build and upgrade to energy-efficient, distributed (or smaller scale), and “smart” power grids, thus ensuring affordable access to electricity.

Further, we must begin upgrading all existing buildings in the United States and building new structures to achieve maximum energy efficiency, water efficiency, safety, affordability, comfort, and durability, including through electrification, as well as spurring massive growth in clean manufacturing in the United States and removing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from manufacturing and industry as much as is technologically feasible, including by expanding renewable energy manufacturing and investing in existing manufacturing and industry.

Changes in transportation include overhauling transportation systems in the United States to remove pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector as much as is technologically feasible, including through investment in zero-emission vehicle infrastructure and manufacturing; clean, affordable, and accessible public transit; and high-speed rail.

GOALS / RECOVERY

In addressing conditions as they now exist, the Green New Deal would engage in mitigating and managing the long-term adverse health, economic, and other effects of pollution and climate change, including by providing funding for community-defined projects and strategies; cleaning up existing hazardous waste and abandoned sites, ensuring economic development and sustainability on those sites; identifying other emission and pollution sources and creating solutions to remove them.

In the long term, recovery projects would include removing greenhouse gases from the atmosphere and reducing pollution by restoring natural ecosystems through proven low-tech solutions that increase soil carbon storage, such as land preservation and afforestation, restoring and protecting threatened, endangered, and fragile ecosystems through locally appropriate and science-based projects that enhance biodiversity and support climate resiliency.

To this end, farming is a key factor in long term recovery, and should begin by working collaboratively with farmers and ranchers in the United States to remove pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from the agricultural sector as much as is technologically feasible, including supporting family farming; by investing in sustainable farming and land use practices that increase soil health and fertility; and by building a more sustainable food system that ensures universal access to healthy food.

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

The role of the Federal Government in furthering the Green New Deal will require transparent and inclusive consultation, collaboration, and partnership with frontline and vulnerable communities, labor unions, worker cooperatives, civil society groups, academia, and businesses, by providing and leveraging, in a way that ensures that the public receives appropriate ownership stakes and returns on investment, adequate capital (including through community grants, public banks, and other public financing), technical expertise, supporting policies, and other forms of assistance to communities, organizations, Federal, State, and local government agencies, and businesses.

The Federal Government must take into account the complete environmental and social costs and impacts of emissions through existing laws, new policies and programs; and ensuring that vulnerable communities shall not be adversely affected. Moving forward, government must participate and lead in the Green New Deal mobilization by providing resources, training, and high-quality education, including higher education, to all people of the United States, with a focus on frontline and vulnerable communities, so that all people of the United States may be full and equal participants. These would include making public investments in the research and development of new clean and renewable energy technologies and industries, as well as directing investments to spur economic development, deepen and diversify industry and business in local and regional economies, and build wealth and community ownership, while prioritizing high-quality job creation and economic, social, and environmental benefits in vulnerable communities, and de-industrialized communities, that may otherwise struggle with the transition away from greenhouse gas intensive industries.

Government must ensure the use of democratic and participatory processes that are inclusive of and led by frontline and vulnerable communities and workers to plan, implement, and administer the Green New Deal mobilization at the local level.

JOBS AND WORK

The Federal Government has the responsibility of ensuring that the Green New Deal mobilization creates high-quality union jobs that pay prevailing wages, hires local workers, offers training and advancement opportunities, and guarantees wage and benefit parity for workers affected by the transition.

In transitioning to green and just working environments, Government must guarantee a job with a family-sustaining wage, adequate family and medical leave, paid vacations, and retirement security to all people of the United States. It must strengthen and protect the right of all workers to organize, unionize, and collectively bargain free of coercion, intimidation, and harassment, as well as strengthening and enforcing labor, workplace health and safety, anti-discrimination, and wage and hour standards across all employers, industries, and sectors.

The Federal Government should enact and enforce trade rules, procurement standards, and border adjustments with strong labor and environmental protections, stop the transfer of jobs and pollution overseas, and grow domestic manufacturing in the United States. These would also ensure a commercial environment where every businessperson is free from unfair competition and domination by domestic or international monopolies.

IN CONCLUSION

The Green New Deal has set these challenging and realizable goals of providing all people of the United States with high-quality health care, affordable, safe, and adequate housing, economic security, and clean water, clean air, healthy and affordable food, and access to nature.

WE CAN DO THIS. LET'S DO IT!

See the Sunrise Movement web site for the text of the House Resolution:

sunrisemovement.org.

Thank You