

GREEN NEW DEAL AND REALITY

By Gary Antonides



When the Green New Deal was proposed, it was accused of advocating doing away with cows, planes, and automobiles and requiring all buildings to be torn down and rebuilt. A congressman even made a public statement while eating a hamburger to show his contempt for the resolution. In order

to find how true these accusations are, you are encouraged to read the actual resolution at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-resolution/109/text>. This article contains the part of the text dealing with the goals and actions, but does not have all the “Whereas” clauses always present in legislative bills. However, it does summarize that portion.

The Green New Deal references the October 2018 report entitled “Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C” by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the November 2018 Fourth National Climate Assessment, which describes the existing and expected problems caused by climate change, and finds that human activity is the dominant cause of climate change. It also outlines the drastic effects of surpassing the goal of 1.5 °C and reaching 2.0 °C. (sea level rise, storms, droughts, mass migration, economic disaster, wildfires, loss of coral reefs, food shortage, etc.). Most importantly, it finds that to meet the 1.5 °C goal, we need global reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from human sources of 40 to 60 percent from 2010 levels by 2030; and net-zero global emissions by 2050.

The Green New Deal also states that because the U.S. has been responsible for a disproportionate amount of greenhouse gas emissions, and since we have a high technological capacity, we must take a leading role in reducing emissions.

It lists other problems the U.S. is experiencing, primarily affecting the disadvantaged, in that clean air, clean water, healthy food, and adequate health care, housing, transportation, and education, are inaccessible to a significant portion of the U.S. population, while wage stagnation and antilabor policies have resulted in the greatest income inequality since the 1920s.

The resolution states that a new national, social, industrial, and economic mobilization on a scale not seen since World War II and the New Deal era should be undertaken to create millions of good, high-wage jobs in the United States, provide unprecedented levels of prosperity and economic security for all, and to counteract systemic injustices. The resolution portion of the bill as introduced in the House as a nonbinding resolution is as follows:

Now, therefore, be it *Resolved* that it is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

(1) it is the duty of the Federal Government to create a Green New Deal—

(A) to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions through a fair and just transition for all communities and workers;

(B) to create millions of good, high-wage jobs and ensure prosperity and economic security for all people of the United States;

(C) to invest in the infrastructure and industry of the United States to sustainably meet the challenges of the 21st century;

(D) to secure for all people of the United States for generations to come: (i) clean air and water;

(ii) climate and community resiliency; (iii) healthy food; (iv) access to nature; and (v) a sustainable environment.

(E) to promote justice and equity by stopping current, preventing future, and repairing historic oppression of indigenous peoples, communities of color, migrant communities, deindustrialized communities, depopulated rural communities, the poor, low-income workers, women, the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth (referred to in this resolution as “frontline and vulnerable communities”);

(2) the goals described in subparagraphs (A) through (E) of paragraph (1) (referred to in this resolution as the “Green New Deal goals”) should be accomplished through a 10-year national mobilization (referred to in this resolution as the “Green New Deal mobilization”) that will require the following goals and projects—

(A) building resiliency against climate change related disasters, such as extreme weather, including by leveraging funding and providing investments for community-defined projects and strategies;

(B) repairing and upgrading the infrastructure in the United States, including: (i) by eliminating pollution and greenhouse gas emissions as much as technologically feasible; (ii) by guaranteeing universal access to clean water; (iii) by reducing the risks posed by climate impacts; and (iv) by ensuring that any infrastructure bill considered by Congress addresses climate change;

(C) meeting 100 percent of the power demand in the United States through clean, renewable, and zero-emission energy sources, including: (i) by dramatically expanding and upgrading renewable power sources; and (ii) by deploying new capacity;

(D) building or upgrading to energy-efficient, distributed, and “smart” power grids, and ensuring affordable access to electricity;

(E) upgrading all existing buildings in the United States and building new buildings to achieve maximum energy efficiency, water

efficiency, safety, affordability, comfort, and durability, including through electrification;

(F) 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;

(G) 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: (i) by supporting family farming; (ii) by investing in sustainable farming and land use practices that increase soil health; and (iii) by building a more sustainable food system that ensures universal access to healthy food;

(H) 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: (i) zero-emission vehicle infrastructure and manufacturing; (ii) clean, affordable, and accessible public transit; and (iii) high-speed rail;

(I) 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;

(J) 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;

(K) restoring and protecting threatened, endangered, and fragile ecosystems through locally appropriate and science-based projects that enhance biodiversity and support climate resiliency;

(L) cleaning up existing hazardous waste and abandoned sites, ensuring economic development and sustainability on those sites;

(M) identifying other emission and pollution sources and creating solutions to remove them; and

(N) promoting the international exchange of technology, expertise, products, funding, and services, with the aim of making the United States the international leader on climate action, and to help other countries achieve a Green New Deal;

(3) a Green New Deal must be developed through transparent and inclusive consultation, collaboration, and partnership with frontline and vulnerable communities, labor unions, worker cooperatives, civil society groups, academia, and businesses; and

(4) to achieve the Green New Deal goals and mobilization, a Green New Deal will require the following goals and projects—

(A) 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 working on the Green New Deal mobilization;

(B) ensuring that the Federal Government takes into account the complete environmental and social costs and impacts of emissions through: (i) existing laws; (ii) new policies and programs; and (iii) ensuring that frontline and vulnerable communities shall not be adversely affected;

(C) 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 in the Green New Deal mobilization;

(D) making public investments in the research and development of new clean and renewable energy technologies and industries;

(E) 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 frontline and vulnerable communities, and deindustrialized communities, that may otherwise struggle with the transition away from greenhouse gas intensive industries;

(F) ensuring 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;

(G) 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;

(H) guaranteeing a job with a family-sustaining wage, adequate family and medical leave, paid vacations, and retirement security to all people of the United States;

(I) strengthening and protecting the right of all workers to organize, unionize, and collectively bargain free of coercion, intimidation, and harassment;

(J) strengthening and enforcing labor, workplace health and safety, antidiscrimination,

and wage and hour standards across all employers, industries, and sectors;

(K) enacting and enforcing trade rules, procurement standards, and border adjustments with strong labor and environmental protections: (i) to stop the transfer of jobs and pollution overseas; and (ii) to grow domestic manufacturing in the United States;

(L) ensuring that public lands, waters, and oceans are protected and that eminent domain is not abused;

(M) obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of indigenous peoples for all decisions that affect indigenous peoples and their traditional territories, honoring all treaties and agreements with indigenous peoples, and protecting and enforcing the sovereignty and land rights of indigenous peoples;

(N) ensuring a commercial environment where every businessperson is free from unfair competition and domination by domestic or international monopolies; and

(O) providing all people of the United States with: (i) high-quality health care; (ii) affordable, safe, and adequate housing; (iii) economic security; and (iv) clean water, clean air, healthy and affordable food, and access to nature.

Comments: By covering so many diverse issues, many of which are known to be controversial, it invites criticism and makes it less likely that people will support it. Since it is so broad in scope, it has been referred to nine committees in the House and thence to the appropriate subcommittees. Regardless of the fact that the bill has not been processed in the House, the Republican Senate voted on the unmodified bill just to ridicule it.

We will not comment on the non-environmental portions of the bill, which, by themselves, also warrant much deliberation and examination.

Regarding the claim that it will allow zero CO₂ emissions, that would mean humans and animals won't breathe, and nothing will ever be burned. What the bill suggests is that we don't add to the level of CO₂ in the atmosphere. So the effects of our breathing, burning, etc. would be balanced by what plant life, soils and oceans absorb. At present, a lot of CO₂ is absorbed by the oceans, but this threatens maritime critters and cannot be sustained. This idea of *net-zero* emissions is not new. According to <https://www.carbon-neutrality.global/press-release-19-countries-now-on-board-to-build-a-carbon-neutral-world/>, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Marshall Islands, Sweden, Canada, Denmark, Spain and the United Kingdom have all pledged to have net-zero emissions by 2050, as well as the following cities in the U.S.: Austin, Boston, Los Angeles, New York City, Philadelphia, Portland, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington.

Other cities all over the world have also made that pledge.

To absorb the CO₂, preservation of forests and other plant life is critical, but there are developing technologies that may also be able to absorb it. Either way, the CO₂ cannot keep increasing indefinitely without disastrous results.

To help reduce CO₂, the bill suggests 100% renewable energy for electrical power. This is possible, but weaning ourselves from fossil fuels for transportation is more difficult. So the bill suggests minimizing the use of fossil fuels, which means making planes, ships, trains, and vehicles more efficient, and developing a high speed rail system that would be much more efficient than planes and would be able to compete with air travel in terms of price and convenience. It would not be necessary to do away with cars, planes, lawn mowers, etc.

To briefly comment on some of the other claims -- the bill suggests we reduce gas emissions as much as possible from the agricultural sector. Since methane comes from the flatulence and belching of cows, critics say that means we can't have beef anymore. Reducing our consumption of beef, though, is wise with regard to our health, and, according to many environmentalists, raising cattle is very costly in environmental terms because it requires many more times the water and feed that other food sources do. Others, however, will disagree with the latter point.

The bill advocates upgrading existing buildings to make them more efficient, safer, etc., but not demolishing them and rebuilding.