

Climate & Energy Communications Cheat Sheet 2/8/19



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On Wednesday, NASA confirmed 2018 was officially the **warmest year on record**, the fourth consecutive warmest year. On the heels of the IPCC report and the Fourth National Climate Assessment, the science is undeniable that the earth is warming and we must take bold and decisive action.

The good news is leaders are stepping up to that call: Just this week, Senator Ed Markey and Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez announced their version of a Green New Deal legislation, which acknowledges the urgent need to reach net zero emissions by 2050 and to do so by utilizing all zero-carbon resources in an equitable way. In addition, we are hearing a lot on climate from the current field of (announced) Democratic candidates. It's clear any serious candidate for President must outline a set of solutions that rise to the challenge of climate change.

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The Green New Deal is a legitimate effort to right the wrongs of American history and repair our standing in the world on the biggest problem our civilization has ever faced.



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The historical context for this moment should not be forgotten.

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A Green New Deal

The long-awaited Green New Deal resolution was announced yesterday and created lots of buzz for the ambitious and aggressive policy initiative sponsored by Democratic legislators Ed Markey and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. The resolution was wide-reaching, but most important was the scientific-based goal of reaching zero emissions by 2050 and the decision not to exclude carbon free tools like nuclear, carbon capture, and hydro as well as renewables.

Talking Points

- Climate change is the existential threat facing our country and the planet. Climate scientists have made abundantly clear that we need bold and ambitious action to get to net-zero emissions by 2050.
- The resolution introduced by Sen. Markey and Rep. Ocasio-Cortez takes a very important step toward that “0x50” goal. The resolution makes it abundantly clear – we must embrace every zero-carbon resource available to eliminate climate pollution and dramatically increase our investment in clean energy innovation.

- Communities of color, regions historically reliant upon fossil fuels, rural Americans, and all vulnerable populations must have an opportunity to shape and benefit from these clean energy policies, as these communities are often most impacted and least responsible for causing the problem.
- Addressing climate change and getting to zero by 2050 is the calling of our time. Congress must now act promptly with hearings and legislation to determine how quickly we can achieve that goal, not just with electricity but also in transportation, industry, buildings, and every other part of our economy.

The Candidates on Climate Change...So Far

The 2020 Presidential cycle shaping up to be the first time where climate change may take center stage as the call for action grows louder and louder. Recent polls show concern about climate is growing among Democrats, Republicans, and especially among Independents (71%). With growing consensus on a need to act, Democratic candidates are being called to show their climate credentials. Let's have a look at some of the contenders who have announced their candidacies - and their current or past positions.

Note: This is not an exhaustive list and does not include those persons who have been speculated about but have not yet announced.

Senator Cory Booker

Senator Booker is considered a strong and pragmatic ally of the climate community, having served as a member of the Environment and Public Works Committee where he helped influence policies on clean air and clean water. Booker has endorsed a Green New Deal and believes in a technology inclusive approach to addressing climate change, having supported preserving existing nuclear energy sources and supporting advanced reactors. The former mayor of Newark and junior senator from New Jersey has said climate change is a "pressing economic and national security crisis."

Senator Kamala Harris

The League of Conservation Voters considers Senator Harris a strong ally of the environmental community, honoring her with a 100% rating. Harris has endorsed a Green New Deal and has previously sponsored legislation that closes tax loopholes for oil companies and stopping new oil and gas leases. At a recently televised town hall, Harris said, "I think that the fact that we have policymakers who are in the pockets of big oil and big coal don't fully appreciate the fact that we are looking at something that is presenting an existential threat to our country."

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand

The junior senator from New York has previously supported carbon pricing, including in the failed 2009 cap-and-trade bill. Senator Gillibrand has recently endorsed a Green New Deal. The Senator supports a technology inclusive approach to reach net zero emissions by 2050, something she voiced in a [letter](#) to Senator John Barrasso, Chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, two weeks ago, saying: “Our committee should be holding hearings and considering legislation designed de-carbonize our economy and get us to net-zero emissions by as close to 2050 as possible. This should include a mix of innovative solutions in transportation policy, climate-smart infrastructure and high-performance energy efficiency.”

Representative Tulsi Gabbard

The Hawaiian congresswoman is one of the few candidates in the race who has yet to announce whether she supports a Green New Deal; however, she has introduced the Off Fuels for a Better Future Act in January 2017, which seeks to end fossil fuel exports and subsidies and source 100% of the US’ electricity from renewable energy by 2035.

Representative Julian Castro

Congressman Castro supports the passage of a Green New Deal and reinstating the United States in the Paris Climate Agreement. As mayor of San Antonio, as Grist reported, Castro “pushed the city’s public utility to close a 900-megawatt coal-powered plant, adopt a 20 percent renewable energy by 2020 pledge, and offer green jobs training.”

Senator Elizabeth Warren

Senator Warren is currently on record for supporting a Green New Deal, and has a 99% lifetime score from the League of Conservation Voters and in her announcement video called out the oil industry for “destroying the planet”. And like her contender, Senator Booker, Warren has voted to fund research on advanced nuclear research, a technology seen as crucial for decarbonization.