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**Policy Brief**

To: House of Representatives and Senate

From: Carlos Lopez

Re: Implementation of the Green New Deal in Our Government

**Executive Summary**

The effects of climate change are rapidly becoming more prevalent, intense, and irreversible. Since the last century, the planet’s average surface temperature has risen about 1 degree Celsius, the global sea level is rising at nearly double the rate it was a century ago, and the intensity, frequency, and duration of North Atlantic hurricanes as well as droughts and heatwaves in the Southwest have all increased.[[1]](#footnote-2)As a result, the concern of the average American for the environment and the urging towards big governments to take action keep growing, especially in younger Americans.[[2]](#footnote-3) However, the current climate change policies do not guarantee immediate and effective action towards these problems. Hence, how can we be assured that our government will actively work towards the reduction and elimination of these problems before it is too late?

The Green New Deal, proposed by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in February 2019, is a resolution that aims to push us to solve these problems by clearly outlining a plan of action and a set of goals, some of which have a deadline as early as 2030, that the government should complete by certain dates.[[3]](#footnote-4) The problem is that this resolution needs to be passed before it has any sort of power to produce change, and this document has already been rejected once back in March of 2019.[[4]](#footnote-5) Therefore, I am aiming this policy brief at you, the congressmen and congresswomen in our senate and house of representatives, so that you may see the necessity of implementing this policy into our government and so that you at least reconsider having another hearing and revoting on it.

**Discussion of the Problem**

Due to the increase in greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide in our atmosphere, the Earth is rapidly warming.[[5]](#footnote-6) This has caused a rapid increase in the number of extreme natural phenomena affecting our nation and, in turn, our world. The often cited 1 degree Celsius increase in the Earth’s average yearly temperature since the end of the 19th century[[6]](#footnote-7) is a common example, but this is just the most direct effect of global warming. The truly devastating effects are the result of all this warming. Besides record high temperatures, more droughts and heat waves are being experienced in the Southwest of the United States which have led to a higher frequency of forest fires.[[7]](#footnote-8) On the other hand, the Northeast part of the United States has experienced more intense rainfall and an increase in precipitation since the 1900s which has resulted in an increase of hurricanes and their intensity. In addition, the eastern parts of the United States are projected to experience wetter winters while the Great Plains and Northwestern parts of the United States are projected to experience drier summers in the future.[[8]](#footnote-9)

The issue is only exacerbated by our further dispelling of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere out of which carbon dioxide makes up the overwhelming majority[[9]](#footnote-10), and despite not being the only country responsible for this catastrophe, we are among the main contributors. As a matter of fact, despite only having about a fourth of their population, the United States ranks second only to China in the amount of carbon dioxide dispelled into the atmosphere.[[10]](#footnote-11) Therefore, to solve this overwhelming problem, serious action needs to be taken by the United States’ and to do that, the passing of this resolution is critical.

**Alternative Solutions**

Before we talk about the Green New Deal, let us see its alternatives already in place. The most similar alternative to the Green New Deal we had in the United States was the United Nation’s Paris Agreement of 2015 wherein we, along with a great deal of other countries, agreed to take an effort to limit the world’s global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius and if possible 1.5 degrees Celsius.[[11]](#footnote-12) This was to be done through, among other things, encouraging cooperation among countries to reduce global warming, reducing and averting the damage of climate change world-wide, and reconvening every five years to report collective progress on climate action.[[12]](#footnote-13) However, as of November 4, 2020, the United States has officially withdrawn from the agreement due to what the then president Trump claimed was an unfair economic burden imposed on American workers, businesses, and taxpayers that he was not willing to take part of until better terms were negotiated.[[13]](#footnote-14) Despite that, as of today, no serious negotiations have been made. There is a hope that the soon-to-be president Joe Biden rejoins the Paris agreement since he stated his intentions to do so on a Tweet,[[14]](#footnote-15) but there is no guarantee.

Other than that, there are not many proposed alternatives to the Green New Deal resolution that are as detailed as the original. Take for example, Representative Matt Gaetz’s “Green Real Deal” which was aimed as a rebuttal and improvement to the Green New Deal. Despite it being a well-placed effort, it is only about half the length of the original and focuses more on relying in the future discoveries and innovations rather than taking action to slow down climate change now.[[15]](#footnote-16) When Ocasio-Cortez was asked about her opinions on it, she replied “Where’s the courage? Where’s the audacity? Where’s the daring? None of it is there. Where’s the beef?”[[16]](#footnote-17) Hence, in its current state, it does not appear that the Green Real Deal will cause much change when compared to the original. Similar ideas include the carbon tax which dates back all the way to Al Gore in 1992 which sought to tax everyone’s usage on carbon, but it has never quite had a successful implementation. In addition, it is hypothesized that it would mainly weigh down the low-income families who actually feel the weight of an extra tax.[[17]](#footnote-18)

The Green New Deal is far from a perfect plan and there are reasonable counter-claims as to why it should not be ratified such as that it promises way too much in a really short period of time and that it does not give much direction on how to accomplish the goals it sets out to achieve. However, not many alternatives have been given, and considering the short amount of time that we have left before we are past the threshold from which we cannot recover, this seems like this is at least a good way to get us into the right mindset so that we may take serious action to solving these problems rather than half-heartedly striving for the solution.

**Recommendation**

The Green New Deal does talk about a few more things other than solving global warming such as the gender wage gap, racial division, and the lack of public resources, so when it tackles so many problems, it is easy to see why people see it as a dreamer’s folly. However, when looking predominantly at the global warming prevention section, it does provide a solid foundation on which it aims to solve the above-established climate change problems by achieving the following goals:

1. **Shifting 100% of national power generation to renewable resources:** The burning of fossil fuels such as natural gas and coal make up more than 62.6% of the electricity generation of the United States. [[18]](#footnote-19)Hence, by completely replacing the usage of these resources to more renewable ones such as nuclear, the amount of greenhouse gases expelled into the atmosphere is expected to greatly decrease.
2. **Building a national energy-efficient “smart” grid:** Most of the United States’ population relies on electrical grids that were designed and built more than 50 years ago.[[19]](#footnote-20) What a “smart” grid aims to achieve is to allow two-way communication between the electricity provider and the client’s home or business. This communication allows the electrical grid to gather more data and therefore lets it better allocate its energy such that less electricity is wasted in the process.[[20]](#footnote-21)
3. **Making a standard for buildings to become energy efficient:** Although there are no definite guidelines on what constitutes an energy-efficient building yet, the general consensus is that a building should try to be as resource-efficient as possible so as to prevent unnecessary over-consumption of resources.[[21]](#footnote-22)

**Decarbonizing manufacturing and agricultural industries:**

1. **Decarbonizing, repairing, and upgrading the nation’s infrastructure, especially transportation:**
2. **Massively fund and invest in the drawdown and capture of greenhouse gases:** As new green technologies arise, the United States should seek to fund them to allow for their further growth
3. **Make the United States an international leader in helping other countries transition to completely carbon-neutral economies:**

As you will probably be able to easily tell, the above points imply a great amount of work and sacrifice despite not providing much guidance on how to get there, and that is indeed another common problem that people have with the resolution. However, the above points manage to solidify the skeleton for a plan that if followed correctly will lead towards solving global warming. We will need to add the meat and details as we go along, but this is a great foundation that tackles a lot of the issues we have.

Therefore, this is not the time to take a gradual approach to solving the problem of global warming. Perhaps 20 or 30 years ago we had that option, but back then we were barely beginning to understand the ramifications of our actions. Now, we do not have the luxury of time, so we need to proceed full force. The pace at which we are solving this problem is simply not sufficiently fast, and failure to resolve it will have negative results whose magnitude we simply cannot predict yet. If anything, the Green New Deal will give us a deadline to visualize and work towards so that global warming becomes a present problem rather than something we need to resolve “later.”

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