

# Thinking green on a white morning

The Bethlehem Gadfly Climate Action Plan, Environment, Environmental Advisory Council, Gadfly's posts, Serious Issues February 11, 2019

*(The latest in a series of posts relating to the environment, Bethlehem's Climate Action Plan, and Bethlehem's Environmental Advisory Council)*  
It was a weekend to think green – like “Green New Deal.”

The weekend of the Ocasio-Cortez/Markey joint Congressional resolution (not a legislative proposal) “Recognizing the duty of the Federal Government to create a Green New Deal.”

Gadfly, as you followers can tell, he thinks, spurred by the fact that Bethlehem is ahead of the curve on local Climate Action Plans, is trying to school himself better in this area.

Here's four texts he spent some time on this weekend.

1) The primary source: [“Recognizing the duty of the Federal Government to create a Green New Deal.”](#) A 10-year national mobilization scheme. Always start with the primary source.

Goals:

- building resiliency against climate change-related disasters
- repairing and upgrading the infrastructure
- 100% clean, renewable, and zero-emission energy sources
- energy-efficient, distributed, and “smart” power grids
- all buildings with maximum energy efficiency
- massive growth in clean manufacturing
- removing pollution/greenhouse gas emissions from the agricultural sector
- overhauling transportation systems to remove pollution/greenhouse gas emissions
- mitigating/managing the health/economic/other effects of pollution/climate change
- removing greenhouse gases from the atmosphere
- restoring and protecting threatened, endangered, and fragile ecosystems
- cleaning up existing hazardous waste and abandoned sites
- identifying other emission and pollution sources

- international exchange of technology, expertise, products, funding, and services

## 2) [Ocasio-Cortez/Markey press conference](#) (17 mins.)

- resolution has many co-sponsors
- green dream
- great programs start with vision of the future
- Pelosi on board
- beginning of education phase of this idea
- silent on any individual technology
- some Republican support
- also an infrastructure bill
- appeals to swing voters
- about the role of government
- smart investment generating returns
- small tax breaks as fossil fuels have gotten
- green generation has risen up
- among top issues in election cycle
- people want ambitious plan
- many different paths to the goal
- charge of gov. expansion is hypocritical
- Federal gov. scientists defying president
- make default clean energy
- this resolution outlines scope of bills that will follow
- will be voting issue in 2020
- resolution deals with principles

## 3) The politics: [Ella Nilsen, “Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is making the Green New Deal a 2020 litmus test.” Vox, February 7, 2019.](#)

- will be a litmus test

- “Once this resolution is announced, there will be a really clear litmus test for what they support,” said Stephen O’Hanlon, spokesman for climate activist group Sunrise Movement. But there’s something larger at work here. The Green New Deal is fundamentally about making climate change a central Democratic priority in 2020 — without shoving aside health care and the economy. After years of this globally important issue languishing on the national agenda, it has come roaring back.
- Some 2020 Democrats have also been cautious about a full-throated endorsement. While the Green New Deal has been endorsed by declared or potential candidates including Kamala Harris, Bernie Sanders, Kirsten Gillibrand, Mike Bloomberg, and Cory Booker, exactly what that means is fuzzy. Staff for 2020 contender Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) told Axios she supports the “idea” of a Green New Deal.
- The fact this proposal is a catch-all of the most progressive programs means it probably isn’t going anywhere in the House, where House Energy and Commerce Chair Frank Pallone has already called the plan too ambitious and unlikely to generate consensus among moderate Democrats in the House, never mind the Senate.
- “The goal of trying to reduce fossil fuels and get to a carbon neutral economy is important and something that I agree with,” Pallone told the Asbury Park Press last month. “The Green New Deal says you can do it in 10 years. I don’t know if that’s technologically feasible. ... Beyond that it’s probably not politically feasible.”
- But to Ocasio-Cortez and Green New Deal backers, that’s not the point. They are banking that the idea will keep spreading. Even some in the House who are skeptical of whether the plan is feasible agree that the branding of the Green New Deal — harkening back to the days of FDR — is a brilliant marketing strategy.
- Progressives are clearly using the Green New Deal to push the debate in their direction. The left wants to make sure they have fully vetted and influenced the ideas of any Democrats that have a shot at winning the White House.
- If Democrats take back the White House and the Senate in 2020 — a big though not impossible if — activists want to have bills ready to go in 2021 to tackle climate change. Realistically, the bills that come

out of the House in the next two years probably won't be as bold as the proposal Ocasio-Cortez is floating.

- But activists won't be totally satisfied until 2020 candidates do two things: embrace Ocasio-Cortez's plan and pledge not to take fossil fuel money. "We're focusing on getting all the 2020 contenders to endorse the full vision of the Green New Deal and get specific about it," O'Hanlon said.

4) The other side, which we always must look at: [Jonah Goldberg, "Green New Deal backers embrace their fantasies." Tribune, February 9.](#)

- It's worth noting that it's not legislation as people normally understand the term. It's a resolution titled "Recognizing the duty of the Federal Government to create a Green New Deal." In other words, even if it passed — a considerable if — nothing would really happen.
- House Speaker Nancy Pelosi isn't taking it too seriously.
- It's not a very serious proposal
- Well, at least the plan isn't too ambitious. Retrofitting "every building in America" can be done in 10 years, but eliminating all the gassy cows will take a bit longer. Maybe we'll move them all to Hawaii, which with the near-abolition of airplanes will be effectively cut off from America anyway.
- Even if you take these goals seriously, as a practical matter it's a fantasy masquerading as green virtue-signaling.
- But it's a fantasy based on a worldview that should be treated seriously because it's so dangerous. NPR's Steve Inskeep asked Ocasio-Cortez whether she was comfortable with the "massive government intervention" critics say is required by such an undertaking.
- The free market hasn't been given free rein, and over the last 40 years the free market and government regulations alike have made laudable environmental progress. In 2017, the U.S. had the largest reductions of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the world for the ninth time this century. Rather than celebrate and build on that reality, the Green

New Dealers would rather embrace their fantasies — and waste a lot of time and money in the process.

Now, to Gadfly followers much more knowledgeable than he, an invitation for things to read and to think about.