

# A glimpse at Green New Deal

Both parties offer different ideas on what plan means

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Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez introduced her Green New Deal in early February as an urgently necessary blueprint to head off “cataclysmic climate disaster.”

President Donald Trump mocked it soon after as a “policy of taking away your car, taking away your airplane flights . . . of ‘you’re not allowed to own cows anymore.’ ”

Democrats and Republicans who have wrestled over controlling the Green New Deal narrative clashed anew late last month when the measure failed to advance in the Senate after a vote called by Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

Democrats were split on how staunchly to defend the Green New Deal but united in denouncing the vote as a GOP stunt. Most Democrats voted “present” rather than for or against it, while Republicans continued to assail it as too costly and too extreme.

## The proposal

On the table was a 14-page, nonbinding resolution that, even at the admission of its defenders, is aspirational.

The Green New Deal, introduced by Ocasio-Cortez (D-Bronx/Queens) in the House and Edward Markey (D-Massachusetts) in the Senate, says that “climate change, pollution, and environmental destruction have exacerbated systemic racial, regional, social, environmental, and economic injustices.”

The proposal urges a “10-year national mobilization” to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, create millions of high-wage jobs, invest in infrastructure and reverse the “historic oppression” of marginalized communities.

It leaves vague how the goals should be achieved. For example, it says infrastructure should be upgraded to eliminate pollution “as much as technologically feasible.”

The broad proposed changes recall the scope of former President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and other congressional Democrats unveil the Green New Deal in February.

New Deal in the 1930s, after which the Ocasio-Cortez pitch was named, experts say.

“They’re not talking about climate change as just an environmental problem anymore,” said Dana Archer Dolan, a George Mason University professor of public policy. “They’re talking about climate change as a wake-up call to fundamentally rethink these different policy areas. . . . It’s also the economy. It’s also our society and social justice issues. All these things are interconnected.”

## Embraced to different ends

Republican leaders seized on the Green New Deal as evidence of a leftward trend toward socialism, sometimes citing a \$93 trillion price tag calculated by the GOP-aligned American Action Forum.

McConnell (R-Kentucky) on the day of the Senate vote on March 26 called it a “dangerous, unachievable and unaffordable manifesto for government control.” Trump has said he is eager

to run against the Green New Deal in 2020.

Democrats say the cost of inaction is greater and an all-encompassing problem requires an all-encompassing solution. All the Democratic senators campaigning to replace Trump in the White House signed on to the Green New Deal and tout it as a progressive priority.

Some moderates in the party, however, endorsed the spirit while cautioning against what they said is an unrealistic political and economic approach.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-New York) has focused his attacks on what he said is the GOP’s failure to address the problem. He launched a Senate Democratic special committee on the climate crisis after his attempt at forming a bipartisan version was blocked.

## Dueling messaging

Trump ridiculed the Green New Deal as a plan to get rid of airplanes and cows. Other critics seized on a guarantee of eco-

economic security for those “unable or unwilling to work.” Fact sheets released by Ocasio-Cortez’s office in rolling out the Green New Deal said supporters were aiming for net zero emissions because they can’t get rid of cows and airplanes “that fast.” They also used the “unwilling” phrase. Those documents were retracted, and none of the language is in the Green New Deal itself.

The freshman congresswoman is pushing ahead with her fight.

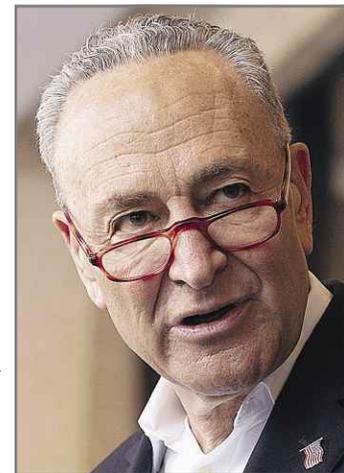
“We talk about cost. We’re going to pay for this whether we pass a Green New Deal or not,” she said last month. “Because as towns and cities go underwater, as wildfires ravage our communities, we’re going to pay.”

## A starting point

Garrett Blad, a national spokesman for the Sunshine Movement, known for organizing young people to demonstrate in favor of the Green New Deal, said polling shows the American



Majority Leader Mitch McConnell



Minority Leader Chuck Schumer

public is increasingly concerned about climate change. He said the resolution is a starting point for them to become engaged.

“We are very explicit in that we are not hoping to pass it through the Senate right now,” he said.

An architect of the Green New Deal said it is purposefully lacking in details.

“For a proposal this large that cuts across the entire economy, that will affect really all Americans, it’s actually important not to be prescriptive or policy-heavy now, so we can actually create a space where we can include a lot of voices in it,” said Rhiana Gunn-Wright, policy director for New Consensus, a group that helped craft the blueprint.

Leah C. Stokes, a University of California-Santa Barbara assistant professor specializing in environmental politics, said: “The package is workable . . . The question is whether the U.S. is ready to take on the rampant income inequality and the climate crisis together.”