

PRIORITIES FOR PROGRESS 2021

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT

Durable solutions to the problems we face won't come from small fixes around the edges. We need solutions that build power for everyday people to emerge from this crisis as a more resilient, just nation. The work ahead of the next president and the next Congress to achieve these goals is formidable. And we can't afford for them to fail.

To help ensure that we are ready to meet this extraordinary moment, organizations from across the progressive movement gathered together to develop policy agendas on key progressive priorities, including both legislative and administrative proposals.



CONTRIBUTORS

This memorandum was informed by members of the Progressive Governance Project Climate Working Group. These organizations are in solidarity and agree on creating millions of high-quality jobs by transitioning to a clean energy economy, putting justice at the forefront, responding to the climate urgency, and averting climate related disasters. Not all of the opinions expressed in this memorandum are fully shared by all the organizations that contributed to its development.

GOALS PRINCIPLES VALUES

The Progressive Governance Project Climate Working Group identified three overarching goals, principles, and values that guide this set of policy recommendations and priorities.

First, any effort to address climate change must **create millions of high-quality jobs by transitioning to a clean energy economy**. This can be achieved by mobilizing investments at the scale of the problems we face to put millions of people back to work building a healthier, more equitable economy across all sectors (e.g., energy, transportation, water, buildings, manufacturing, land, agriculture, care). We can ensure high job quality by requiring all investments meet high-road labor standards that ensure access to unions and collective bargaining, family-sustaining wages and benefits, and safe workplaces.

Second, **justice must be at the forefront of this work**. We must ensure that those who have borne the brunt of the unjust status quo have the power to guide the economic transition and to reap the economic, health, and environmental benefits — including Black, Indigenous, and communities of color; women; low-income communities; deindustrialized communities; communities impacted by the economic transition; immigrants; and people formerly incarcerated (hereafter, “disadvantaged communities”). This includes creating economic opportunities and ensuring that a disproportionate share of the job and wealth creation benefits of new investments accrue to disadvantaged communities. Such a justice oriented approach requires that we slash toxic pollution in order to eliminate health and environmental hazards in disadvantaged communities by dramatically curtailing air, water, and land pollution while remediating the cumulative harms inflicted by such pollution and holding polluters accountable. Finally, justice at the forefront means committing to self-determination by recognizing the sovereignty of Indigenous and Tribal nations and guaranteeing a leading role for disadvantaged communities in planning and implementing the economic transition.

Third, we must respond to **climate urgency** and act now to avert climate-related disasters by dramatically reducing climate pollution while bolstering climate resilience. Swiftly reducing climate pollution throughout the economy puts America solidly on a path by 2030 that is consistent with the goal of staying below 1.5 degrees Celsius of global warming. Investments in infrastructure and services that enable communities and workers to prepare for and respond to climate-related disasters to minimize harm and displacement build climate resilience.

PRIORITIES FOR THE FIRST 100 DAYS

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

1. LAUNCH AN ECONOMIC RENEWAL PLAN

Pass a bold, equitable, and forward-looking stimulus package with trillions of dollars in investments to tackle the overlapping crises of racial and economic injustice, mass unemployment, public health, and climate change. All investments in the stimulus package should be subject to high-road labor standards (e.g., prevailing wage, safety, and health protections, project labor agreements, neutrality toward union organizing, registered apprenticeships, Buy America and domestic content, local hire), equity standards (e.g., 40% of funding targeted to disadvantaged communities, community benefit agreements, equitable hiring and contracting that favors disadvantaged communities), and environmental standards (e.g., priority for zero- to low-emissions, high-efficiency, and high-resilience materials and parts; investing these funds in workers and communities, not corporate fossil fuel polluters). Using grants, low-or-no interest loans, tax credits, and/or consumer rebates, this stimulus package should achieve these priority investment goals:

ENERGY

- Dramatically expand clean renewable electricity generation.
- Upgrade our transmission infrastructure, battery storage, and distribution grid to bolster reliability, efficiency, and resilience.
- Invest in energy efficiency and access to clean renewable electricity in rural areas, including by supporting rural electric cooperatives.
- Support community ownership of distributed clean renewable electricity.
- Repair leaking gas pipelines.
- Expand research, development, and deployment projects in grid modernization, efficiency, renewable energy, and other pollution-reducing technologies.



TRANSPORTATION

- Upgrade all local and regional public transit systems and our national rail network by expanding access, affordability, electrification, efficiency, and resilience.
- Support bikeable and walkable communities by investing in Complete Streets.
- Electrify all public vehicles, including school and transit buses; expand consumers' access to affordable electric vehicles; and build charging infrastructure nationwide.

WATER

- Replace all lead pipes and ensure access to clean drinking water.
- Upgrade wastewater infrastructure to reduce flooding and toxic runoff by investing in sewage and stormwater systems and green infrastructure projects.
- Eliminate per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and other dangerous chemicals in water systems.

BUILDINGS

- Retrofit all public buildings — including public housing and Municipal, University, School, and Hospital buildings — and private buildings, starting with low-income homes, to achieve electrification, efficiency, pollution reduction, climate resilience, and higher living standards.

MANUFACTURING

- Retool factories to build the goods needed to achieve the above goals.
- Expand procurement of domestic components to slash pollution in publicly-owned energy, transportation, water, and buildings assets.
- Invest in technology adoption and research, development, and deployment to support clean processes and emissions reductions in energy-intensive industries.

LANDS

- Clean up toxic pollution and restore economic opportunities by reclaiming and remediating Superfund, Brownfields, abandoned mine, orphaned oil and gas wells, and other polluted sites, while ensuring that polluters cover cleanup costs.
- Protect and restore wetlands, forests, and public lands that support clean air, clean water, and climate resilience, including via a more equitable reboot of the Civilian Conservation Corps.
- Work with Indigenous nations to return lands to tribal management and control in line with treaties and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

AGRICULTURE

- Invest in family farmers to support regenerative agriculture practices that bolster soil health, productivity, and climate resilience, including by restoring supply management programs based on parity pricing, rebuilding local and regional food infrastructure, and reversing historic, systemic discrimination against Black farmers.

2. ENSURE FAIRNESS FOR WORKERS AND COMMUNITIES

Guarantee pensions, wage support, healthcare, other benefits, and training for workers impacted by economic transition, and invest in economic diversification, job creation, remediation, and funding for local budget shortfalls in transitioning areas.

3. REINVEST IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND ESTABLISH A NEW PUBLIC FINANCIAL INSTITUTION

Create a new public institution to strategically and coherently mobilize and channel public and private investments to achieve the above goals. The new institution should include an accountable governance structure (designed by the task force named below).

4. STRENGTHEN ENVIRONMENTAL, EQUITY, AND LABOR STANDARDS THAT SUPPORT HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

- Establish an environmental and climate justice mapping initiative to track the distribution of cumulative health and environmental impacts from toxic pollution and climate change.
- Establish an equity screen for the development of climate and environmental regulations to ensure a leading voice, disproportionate benefits, and hazard elimination for disadvantaged communities.
- Strengthen the Clean Air Act to establish explicit targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the energy, transportation, buildings, and industrial sectors.
- Expand the Clean Water Act to regulate water pollution from all sectors, including agriculture.
- Repeal the “Halliburton Loophole” in the Safe Drinking Water Act.
- Pass the PRO Act and remove other barriers to workers’ organizing rights to support increased union density in all economic sectors, including clean technology sectors.
- Enact a new Buy Clean procurement standard that incentivizes reductions in industrial emissions while supporting good manufacturing jobs in clean facilities.
- Align our tax policy and overseas finance with the goals above, shifting from subsidizing fossil fuel production to investing in a clean and just economy.
- Break up corporate monopolies and monopsonies in all sectors that contribute to increased pollution and costs and reduced power for consumers, workers, and family farmers.
- Overhaul Trade Promotion Authority to require that trade agreements include strong climate, environmental, labor, and human rights standards, bound by independent enforcement.
- Enact a border duty on imported goods made with high levels of emissions to counterbalance corporate dumping of environmental and climate pollution in other countries.

PRIORITIES FOR THE FIRST 100 DAYS

ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES

1. ESTABLISH NEW OFFICES TO GUIDE THE ECONOMIC TRANSITION

— Establish a National Climate Council with Cabinet-level representatives from across government to coordinate a whole-of-government approach to transitioning the economy to tackle climate change.

— Create an Office of Environmental and Climate Justice Accountability to ensure that disadvantaged communities and environmental and climate justice groups have a direct line to federal agencies to advocate for stronger regulations to reduce emissions, remediate impacts, and build climate resilience.

— Establish an Office of Economic Transition to facilitate access to public resources for workers and communities impacted by economic transition, including by coordinating resource delivery across agencies and sectors and by offering local leaders capacity-building support and technical assistance.

— Create a task force, with majority representation from disadvantaged communities and unions, to design the structure of the public financial institution outlined above to ensure democratic governance, accountability to disadvantaged communities, and achievement of the above goals.

2. ISSUE EXECUTIVE ORDERS

— Rescind all executive orders of the Trump administration that undermine environmental protection, including orders that weaken environmental regulations or encourage fossil fuel development.

— Correct historic environmental injustices with an executive order to remediate the cumulative impacts of toxic air, water, and land pollution and climate change in disadvantaged communities identified via stringent monitoring, environmental and climate justice mapping, and a rigorous “no hotspots” policy. To prevent further harm, the order should require agencies to meet environmental justice, climate resilience, and lifecycle climate pollution tests for permitting, relevant rulemaking, and other actions.

— Codify Free, Prior, and Informed Consent for Indigenous nations and tribes and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, without qualification.

— Issue a Climate Mobilization Plan, developed by the National Climate Council, that sets sector-specific goals and supporting policies for emissions reductions and climate resilience in 2030 and beyond to stay below 1.5 degrees of global

warming. This plan should uphold the above goals of creating high-quality jobs, anchoring investments and pollution relief in disadvantaged communities, and respecting self-determination. The plan should ensure a just recovery from climate disasters, including by committing to use the Stafford Act and Defense Production Act to rebuild after climate disasters in a resilient and equitable manner. The plan also should ramp up U.S. climate diplomacy via high-ambition engagement in United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), G20, G7 and other international fora, in addition to expanding U.S. climate finance commitments, including contributions to the Green Climate Fund.

- Declare a Climate Emergency under the National Emergencies Act in order to unlock the full suite of executive powers that can accomplish the necessary response to the climate crisis.

- Lead the nation in the transition to a clean energy economy by issuing an executive order to upgrade all federal transportation, energy, buildings, and other assets to support electrification, clean renewable energy, and climate resilience, subject to Buy American, Buy Clean, and Buy Fair procurement rules. This includes electrifying all federal vehicles, retrofitting all federal buildings, and converting all federal energy assets to clean renewable energy.

- Establish an immediate moratorium on all new fossil fuel leasing and permitting on federal lands and waters and in environmental and climate justice communities (as identified via the above mapping) and all federal permits for new fossil fuel infrastructure projects.

- Direct the Department of Justice (DOJ) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to fully hold polluters accountable for crimes of deceiving the public and blocking action to protect public health and lives.

- Establish a government-wide goal of protecting 30% or more of U.S. lands and waters by 2030 for biodiversity conservation and climate stabilization and create an interagency task force to establish a national strategy, with specific policies and interim deadlines, for achieving the goal.

- Issue an executive order announcing a new pro-worker, pro-environment, pro-equity model of trade that includes high-road labor, environmental, and human rights standards; independent and binding enforcement; elimination of handouts to corporate polluters; and a transparent and inclusive process for renegotiating all existing U.S. trade agreements to conform to the new model.

3. ENACT NEW REGULATIONS

- Reverse the Trump administration's rollbacks of over 100 environmental protections, including regulations on pollution; safety from chemicals and toxins; and conservation of lands and biodiversity.
- Establish new regulatory review models that overhaul cost-benefit analysis to capture the full benefits of environmental, climate, and public health regulations.
- Direct EPA's Office of Air and Radiation to use its authority under the Clean Air Act to adopt stronger national ambient air quality standards for ozone, particulate matter, and other dangerous criteria pollutants, and to establish robust climate pollution standards for all vehicles (including electric) and aircraft; new buildings; power plants; oil and gas facilities; and energy-intensive industries.
- Direct EPA's Office of Water to enact stronger standards to protect drinking water from lead, copper, and other priority pollutants under the Clean Water Act, and to enact new restrictions to limit PFAS contamination in all water sources.
- Direct EPA's Office of Land and Emergency Management to enact standards for closing and cleaning up coal ash pits and to improve the Superfund process by taking the lead of disadvantaged communities in site selection and remediation, accounting for climate impacts, and remediating all PFAS chemicals.
- Direct the Department of Energy to update appliance standards to cut climate pollution and energy use.
- Direct the Department of Transportation to implement a climate resilience performance standard for repairing and building transportation infrastructure and to issue new public safety rules that limit expansion and reduce risks of surface transportation of fossil fuels, primarily crude oil by rail.

COALITION PLATFORMS WITH FURTHER LEGISLATIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRIORITIES

[BlueGreen Alliance: Solidarity for Climate Action](#)

[Equitable & Just National Climate Platform](#)

[United Frontlines Table: A People's Orientation to a Regenerative Economy](#)

[US Climate Action Network: The Vision for Equitable Climate Action](#)

[Coalition for Clean Energy and Healthy Communities](#)

Green New Deal Network: Economic Renewal Plan (forthcoming)

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