



FEDERAL POLICY AND REGULATION

Climate Action Plan Released by House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis

Wide-Ranging Report Advances Conversation on Legislation for the 117th Congress and Beyond

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Democratic staff of the U.S. House of Representatives' Select Committee on the Climate Crisis released a long-awaited report with more than 100 policy recommendations comprising a comprehensive action plan to address climate change. The report, "[Solving the Climate Crisis: The Congressional Action Plan for a Clean Energy Economy and a Healthy, Resilient, and Just America](#)," is the culmination of nearly two years' work conducting hearings, soliciting stakeholder input and working with House members since the committee was created by Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) at the start of the 116th Congress.

Because the Climate Crisis Committee possesses no statutory jurisdiction, the plan simply makes recommendations to various House committees that the respective chairs may choose to adopt as the "gold standard" for future climate-oriented legislation. The climate roadmap targets all electric cars by 2035, net-zero emissions from electric utilities by 2040 and net-zero greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors of the economy by 2050. The latter is a top-line goal that is becoming increasingly prevalent in Democratic rhetoric approaching the 2020 elections. While not as ambitious as the Green New Deal advocated for by the party's progressive wing, which calls for net-zero emissions by 2035, the 2050 timeline is viewed as more economically and politically feasible by dozens of senior and moderate Democrats.

Although the passage of comprehensive climate legislation in the 117th Congress is unlikely unless both the balance of power in Congress and control of the White House flip to Democrats after the 2020 elections, the plan offers a progressive but feasible starting point for future negotiations. It also creates opportunity for bipartisanship in some of its recommendations.

Recognizing the practical realities of meeting the 2050 goal, the plan includes nuclear power as a clean energy source despite Democrats' mixed opinions on the resource. The report also acknowledges that some sectors of the economy will be particularly challenging to decarbonize – such as heavy-duty transportation, aviation and heavy industries such as steelmaking – and indicates that oil, gas and coal resources may continue to play a role in these sectors. Among the recommendations are policies to reduce emissions as much as possible from these resources, including supporting biofuels as well as carbon capture, utilization and sequestration as interim solutions until more economically feasible solutions emerge.



PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

While the below summary is far from a comprehensive list, some major tenets of the Democrats' plan include:

- a carbon pricing scheme, though the plan does not offer suggestions for its basis or implementation
- investment and tax policy changes to bolster renewable energy while drawing down fossil fuel
- transportation sector emissions reductions emphasizing domestic manufacture and deployment of zero-emissions vehicles
- reorganization of the U.S. Department of Energy to better support applied energy and deployment
- creation of a National Climate Bank to fund climate-oriented infrastructure development
- environmental justice, focusing on climate impact mitigation and economic opportunity in low-income communities and communities of color

THIRD-PARTY SUPPORT AND CRITICISM

The plan was released with the most ideologically broad [third-party support](#) of any climate plan to date, including a spectrum of 90 environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs), think tanks, public health groups, trade associations, labor groups, and leaders from state, local and tribal governments. Despite the broad acclaim, some criticism was levied from highly progressive organizations citing scientific studies calling for more ambitious emissions reductions and characterizing the plan as too weak. Moreover, some conservative groups suggested that the plan was a partisan rewrite of the Green New Deal, adding that many of the plan's components would be disadvantageous for the U.S. economy.

Upon its release, Speaker Pelosi pledged to turn the plan's recommendations into law. Meanwhile, the Climate Crisis Committee's Republican members [expressed disappointment](#) that the document was released without an amendment process and without opportunity to endorse recommendations on a bipartisan basis. The minority members' statement also acknowledged the role that shale natural gas has played in reducing the U.S. carbon footprint, calling for policies that address emissions while "protecting the economic and geopolitical value of our natural resources." The minority staff is expected to release in the coming months its own, more modest recommendations that may include common ground provisions supported by both sides.

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