

# GREEN NEW DEAL DECLARATION

By Pittsburgh Activists



We are joining together with others in the Pittsburgh area to become part of a national Green New Deal network that is crystallizing throughout the United States, and with like-minded people in countries around the world. We are committed to building popular support and mass momentum for a program providing a livable environment and decent quality of life for all people. Inseparable from this will be a genuinely democratic future in which all people will have a decisive say in decisions affecting their lives (what Abraham Lincoln defined as “government of the people, by the people, for the people”), with liberty and justice for all – no exceptions.

*The point of the Green New Deal is to help ensure human survival and a decent quality of life for all, sustaining an environment that can sustain life.* It involves ending and reversing the damage to our environment, while at the same time ensuring union scale jobs with a special focus on Black and Brown people and displaced fossil fuel industry workers, racial justice, health care, housing, mass transit systems, education, and cultural opportunities – in short mutual respect and quality of life for all people.

We envision a movement for the Green New Deal that embraces the great majority of people who can currently be found across the political spectrum – including those self-identifying as freedom-loving anarchists and enlightened conservatives, with humanist liberals and varieties of socialists in-between, including Democrats and Republicans and Greens and independents. Within the common effort, we must be able to share our different perspectives on the realities we face. That is why some of us are joining together to offer the thoughts expressed in this declaration.

## Crisis and Hope

Economic crises and declining living standards have characterized the experience of a majority of the American people over the past several decades, with an accelerating pace of climate change and ecological wreckage, with an epidemic of hurricanes, a plague of wildfires, and a devastating coronavirus pandemic as portents of worse to come. This relates to a globalization process that has enhanced the power and profits of multi-national corporations at the expense of the well-being of a majority of the people – with mounting

damage to our quality of life and a livable environment. This is far from being unique to the United States – it afflicts all countries, with many hit harder than we are.

A common reaction has been the generation of a right-wing fake “populism” funded by right-wing billionaires, catapulting to national leadership a variety of pro-business bigots who have proved incapable of dealing seriously with the crises. Instead right-wing leaders have resorted to one or another variety of racism, misogyny, xenophobia, science-denial, and authoritarianism. Soaring profits and tax breaks for the rich are invariably coupled with declining incomes and eroding social programs for the laboring majority.

We in the United States have lived through our own version of this. After a long conservative drift (with conservatism itself debased by greed, opportunism, and dishonesty), Lincoln’s once-proud Republican Party has suffered take-over and travesty at the hands anti-democratic elements waving the banners of the old pro-slavery Confederate States of America. A corruption of democratic values has caused some to tolerate an increasingly aggressive and violent racism, even sheltering elements inclined to flaunt the Nazi swastika. The program and policies advanced by the wealthy elements that currently dominate the Republican Party – despite endless claims of representing “real Americans” – undermine the present and future well-being of their own mass base, along with the rest of us.

Yet there are amazing and hopeful triumphs that have pushed back the destructive realities afflicting us.

Massive mobilizations and upsurges throughout the United States, representing new and rising generations – including the Occupy Wall Street movement, the Black Lives Matter movement, the Million Women’s March movement, a number of labor insurgencies (particularly among teachers, health care workers, and service employees) – have over the past decade provided an essential challenge to the fake-populism, limiting the power of a bigoted President, his allies, and his enablers.

Drawing strength and inspiration from these struggles, stunning victories have recently been won. A wealthy and authoritarian-minded bigot has been dislodged from the White House. A right-wing onslaught has been pushed back. Progressive goals – including the Green New Deal – have become central to mainstream discussion and debate in the United States. The present moment crackles with immensely hopeful possibilities.

Yet there are obstacles we face while seeking to advance our goal.

### **Dangers and Pressures**

Successive waves of mobilization on the part of left-progressive forces were able to defeat the forces of political reaction. But a powerful counter-mobilization is clearly underway. It has been able to consolidate a fair amount of control within the Republican Party. It is embraced by right-wing elements among the very wealthy and somewhat-less-wealthy, by corrupt elements holding sway among evangelical Christians, and by sectors of the working class. It enjoys influence within police departments in much of the country. Taken together, this provides ample resources and a mass base that gives these elements hope that significant aspects of the Democratic victory might soon be overturned. A violent and murderous fascist-type movement might crystallize as future crises unfold. If we are serious about winning a genuine Green New Deal, we must recognize such dangers as these.

But if we are serious about winning a genuine Green New Deal, we must also recognize the existence of other dangers. Within the Democratic Party, as well as among moderates of the Republican Party, there has long been a powerful influence of what some have tagged “corporate-liberalism.” The term “corporate” refers to the existence of powerful business corporations that dominate our economy and penetrate our

political life. In his farewell address, President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued a warning about the growth of a military-industrial complex whose “total influence – economic, political, even spiritual – is felt in every city, every State house, every office of the Federal government.” Eisenhower warned that “the potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.” To this must be added the fossil-fuel complex, the pharmaceutical-insurance-medical complex, a media-entertainment-information-communication complex, and other wealthy business complexes that put corporate profits before the needs of our people.

This helps explain a pattern evident for decades: an impulse of all-too-many Democratic Party liberals to compromise with mortal enemies. Even now, President Biden has emphasized his desire to give serious consideration to Republican Party proposals and to reach for a compromise. Reversion to a phony “political realism” (which dominated our political life for decades) threatens to blunt, undermine, and disperse genuine struggles for economic, social, and environmental survival. If progressive Democrats compromise with dominant centrist Democrats, and centrist Democrats compromise with right-wing Republicans, then the defeat of a genuine Green New Deal is inevitable.

Our country’s history has demonstrated that victories for human rights and the well-being of the majority of people have been won by persistent mobilization of popular consciousness and the momentum of mass struggle. This was shown by the abolitionist movement against slavery, insurgent waves of the women’s rights movement, working-class struggles of the labor movement, the civil rights movement, the mass movement to end the Vietnam war, and more – in each case, a force independent of compromising politicians. “If there is no struggle there is no progress,” Frederick Douglass explained long ago. “Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.”

The promise of the Green New Deal can never be realized unless we are guided by this wisdom. The demand must be made clear, and then there must be the pressure of principled mass struggle. Avowed enemies can only be overcome, and avowed friends can only be emboldened through the momentum of independent mass struggle.

### **The Promise of a Green New Deal**

It has been said that the three words “Green New Deal” can mean everything, anything, and nothing. What follows is what we mean – a massive and multi-faceted program that would result in the rebuilding of our economy to achieve several interlinked and inseparable goals:

- (1) elimination of technologies and practices undermining a livable environment, leading to disasters in climate, migration, health, food production, the quality of urban and rural life, destruction of forests, the oceans and fresh water sources, the prospects of long-term human survival and bio-diversity;
- (2) generating power through sustainable and environmentally responsible methods that are democratically controlled based on human and global needs, not private profit;
- (3) a strong and binding commitment to support workers of all religious, ethnic, and racial backgrounds, and to support all communities, whether urban or rural, especially in the fossil fuel-related industries, that are impacted by a transitioning economy providing a *just transition* that is spelled out in detail, controlled by workers and their unions, going beyond the dishonest and empty rhetoric to which they have been subjected for five decades;

- (4) good paying union jobs, as well as decent housing and mass transit systems, with educational, recreational and, cultural opportunities and quality of life for all people – amounting to full employment and elimination of poverty, bringing together people of all races and ethnic backgrounds, correcting environmental racism and theft of native lands, ensuring liberty and justice for all;
- (5) in the context of redesigning energy production, environmental clean-up and “green living,” guaranteeing a healthy climate that does not cause disease, developmental disorders, or physical injury, with care for health damage caused by previous climate degradation, through a universal system of healthcare for all (no exceptions);
- (6) a return to more equitable tax structures of the past (from the mid-1930s to the late-1970s), ending tax loopholes for the rich, placing the appropriate burden back onto multinational corporations and billionaires, easing the burden on the over-taxed middle-income and working-class portions of our population, combined with readjustments in the allocation of national resources away from wasteful military expenditures, toward meeting human needs – all providing ample resources for programs associated with the Green New Deal;
- (7) a genuinely global orientation comprehending and responding to the specific needs of those living in what is often referred to as “the Global South,” where cultures, human rights, and the environment have been assaulted by centuries of horrific imperial, colonialist, and military violence – portions of the Earth whose ecology and diverse peoples must be included within the life affirming and democratic goals of the Green New Deal if our planet is to be saved;
- (8) international collaboration in accelerating the green energy transition – including the establishment of new mines and processing facilities for minerals that are required in converting solar and wind power into electricity (cobalt, copper, lithium, nickel, and the rare-earth elements), developing substitutes for materials in short supply, improving mining techniques to reduce environmental hazards, and dramatically increasing the recycling of vital minerals from discarded batteries and other products.

Such an approach goes far beyond partisan politics. Not only have detailed plans for a genuine Green New Deal been put forward by independents (such as Bernie Sanders) and the Green Party, but polls show that four-fifths of the country’s registered voters support a Green New Deal – including two-thirds of Republican voters and even more Democratic voters.

The kind of comprehensive approach that is needed has been articulated, with different valuable emphases, by the Native-American Red New Deal, the Red, Black and Green New Deal, and the THRIVE Agenda. The acronym THRIVE stands for Transform, Heal, and Renew by Investing in a Vibrant Economy, and the THRIVE Agenda. In April 2021, the THRIVE Act was submitted to Congress. It authorizes investments of at least \$1 trillion per year for 2022-2031, creating more than 15 million good jobs, ending the unemployment crisis, while cutting climate pollution in half by 2030 and confronting systemic racism and gender, economic, and environmental injustice.

There is a need for the working out of further practical details of a genuine Green New Deal, involving the input and participation of a majority of the people. But a basic framework regarding policies, programs, and funding already exists. The time-table suggested by President Joseph Biden to transition away from fossil-fuels provides significant target-dates: dramatic reduction from 2005 levels in economy-wide net greenhouse gas pollution by 2030, and its elimination, economy-wide, by 2050. Both the THRIVE Act and a genuine Green New Deal propose bolder goals to be achieved by those dates, in line with the findings of climate science.

## Moving Forward to Our Goal

The Green New Deal, if it is to be genuine, has no chance of being won without a massive power-shift in our society. That will come only through struggles of the people, by the people, for the people – particularly the great majority on whose lives and labor all of society is dependent – both economically and politically. This working-class majority will not support the Green New Deal unless there are well organized, diverse, democratically conducted campaigns designed to help more and more people understand, embrace, and fight for the Green New Deal.

In the Pittsburgh area, we intend to help launch an intersecting set of campaigns – with yearly target goals – that will build consciousness of what the Green New Deal is and why we need it, mobilize energy and popular momentum for immediate, practical action for the environment, and mobilize support and pressure for policies that will make an equitable Green New Deal a reality over the coming decade.

- **Build Consciousness** on the problems we face and the solutions we need, through a variety of educational efforts, structured by a SET OF YEARLY GOALS: how many home meetings; how many educational discussions; how many presentations to organizations; how many viewings of videos; how many public forums; how much information distributed; how many cultural events; etc. *A key aspect of our work will be exposing the profiteering of existing power corporations, the extent of their environmentally destructive policies, and how much less expensive and less destructive Green energy can be.*
- **Practical Action** to begin the transition with practical projects that can be initiated and carried out in the here-and-now, structured by a SET OF YEARLY GOALS: how many trees planted; how many environmental clean-ups achieved; how many regenerative farming initiatives undertaken; how many solar and wind energy transitions completed; etc. *Especially important will be working with the local scientific community to outline and facilitate Green transitions.*
- **Mobilize Support and Pressure** for passage of legislation and implementation of policies, structured by a SET OF YEARLY GOALS: an accumulating number of signatures on petitions, organizational resolutions passed, endorsements from public figures (celebrities, elected officials, etc.), street actions, and referenda – with growing short-term and intermediate victories paving the way for the realization of the Green New Deal. *While immediate focus can be on the THRIVE initiative launched by progressive Democrats, if it wins there will still be much work to do – and if it doesn't win, we will learn from that experience and continue to move forward.*

We will work with like-minded people throughout the Pittsburgh area, throughout the United States, and in countries around the world. Our priority is to reach out to those who are not yet part of the struggle. We want our activities and campaigns to build a socially conscious majority movement for a Green New Deal, winning the support of a diverse working-class majority.

“The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice,” according to Martin Luther King, Jr. But he also taught that we cannot just wait, we cannot just hope or talk or ask or preach. Nor do we have an indefinite period of time to deal with climate change. The urgency of our situation compels us to join together in massive numbers to struggle for social, economic, and environmental justice.

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