



The Green New Deal: How Far We've Come

A study of GND policy in the U.S.
January, 2021

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The Green New Deal

In order to transition our energy systems towards greater sustainability and to protect workers and communities through the transition, we need to encourage our local legislators to create policy that is in line with a Just Transition. With that in mind, many legislators are being pushed by constituents and advocacy groups to propose their own versions of state level Green New Deals. Like the original New Deal, these policies would be a comprehensive packages that provide the funding, resources, and direction on how to make this transition. This New Deal will be inclusive of all people, including the BIPOC communities that were left out of the original New Deal.

Though the idea of the Green New Deal has been circulated for years, the term has recently gained attention through the efforts of both the Sunrise Movement and progressive politicians like New York's Rep Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. The federal proposal H. Res 109 attempts to bring together several coalitions of people with different interests, and has made apparent certain truths about environmental legislation. First, climate policies will be more effective in mobilizing the public if they are interconnected with social and economic policies around healthcare, wages, and poverty. Second, effective climate action requires having a bold vision since we are currently on a trajectory of no return to saving our planet. State and city-level politicians have been inspired and pushed by movements to pass bold climate legislation in places like Maine, Seattle, Los Angeles, and New York City.

Our Analysis:

Interested in understanding the variation in state level Green New Deal Legislation, our research team created a database of all GND legislation proposed in the U.S.

This report seeks to expand the analysis of the data collected for this database. In surveying these proposed policies, we analyzed each state's proposed solutions for topics such as a Just Transition for Labor, Green Energy, Emissions Reductions, Green Infrastructure, and Support from Stakeholders.

With a larger understanding of the currently proposed federal GND resolution, this report seeks to inform readers on the progress that has been made towards each state's GND. Until able to pass a federal GND, state level legislation may be the most direct solution to a commitment to combating the climate crisis.

Categories of Analysis:

The following five topics are five of the core tenets touched upon in Rep. Ocasio-Cortez's H. Res 109 federal GND policy. Each proposed legislation will be analyzed for its intended solution to each topic in the state's proposed GND.

Green Infrastructure

Multiple states have provided solutions or options for transitioning current fossil fuel dependent systems to more ecologically friendly solutions.

These solutions include, but are not limited, to: adoption of solar energy structures in schools, reductions in energy use for current structures, and incorporation of electric public transportation.

Support from Stakeholders

With the majority of proposed legislation coming from Democratic Leaders, support from local environmental groups has been pivotal to the passing of GND legislation. These groups are what we refer to as stakeholders of support, as many played a part in the creation of the policy.

Greening Energy Systems

With a large emphasis on green energy in H. Res 109, many states included incorporating green energy measures into their GND policies.

The transition from fossil fuel heavy industries to green energy solutions must include incorporation of renewable energy, such as solar and wind. Similarly, other states have set energy consumption reduction measures.

Emissions Reductions

Pivotal to the incorporation of green energy and infrastructure is the use political levers to legislate and regulate carbon emissions. Many states include time sensitive provisions aiming to reduce emissions by a particular percentage. These reductions sometimes aim to lower emissions to a level from past decades. Others set the ambitious goal of zero carbon emissions.

Just Transition for Labor Force

With the transition in energy and infrastructures to green energy systems comes a need to retrain those currently employed by the fossil fuel industry. Many GND plans include the creation of opportunities for existing labor forces to enter the green energy sector. More advanced proposals outlined plans to increase the rights and working conditions for those employed by green energy industries.

Proposed State Level GND Legislation

State	Bill Proposed	Status of Bill
California	AB 1839	Proposed
Connecticut	SB 354	Proposed
Illinois	SB 2132	Proposed
Maine	LD 1282	Passed
Minnesota	HF 2836	Proposed
New York	CLCPA	Passed
New Mexico	SB 489	Passed
North Carolina	HR 737	Proposed
Rhode Island	H 5665	Proposed
Vermont	S 311	Proposed
Virginia		Proposed
Washington	SB 5116	Passed

Passed Policies

Four policies have been passed within the United States. Multiple East Coast states lead the U.S. in passing bills related to state level Green New deals.

Maine

On June 11th, 2019 Maine legislators passed LD 1282, an Act to Establish a Green New Deal for Maine. Sponsored by Rep. Chloe Maxim, the bill offers a climate intervention strategy that uses public facilities to lead the infrastructural transition by carving out provisions for apprenticeships.

These apprenticeship opportunities include leading electric and natural gas conservation projects in school construction projects designated by the State Board of Education, and creating a trust to arrange power purchase agreements for solar capacity for new school construction.

A climate activist endorsed by the Sunrise Movement, at 26 years old Maxim is the youngest woman currently serving in Maine's legislature. Maxim said that the conversation will go on, indicating that this is only the first step. Maxim's bill was the first Green New Deal endorsed by an AFL-CIO affiliate. Some critics, such as ME Rep. Higgins, claim that that bill puts too much emphasis on addressing union concerns while doing little to stop climate change. To more meaningfully address climate change now, more steps could be taken to incorporate industry restrictions.

New Mexico

On March 23, 2019 New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed into law the Energy Transition Act, SB 489, a complex bill that will move the state toward cleaner electricity generation, shut down the West's largest coal-fired power plants in 2022, and provide a framework for a Just Transition for economically affected communities. The bill was sponsored by Sen. Candelaria, Small, Stewart, Caballero, and Egoif. One of the goals of the bill is for the state to produce 80 percent of their electricity by renewable sources by 2040 and 100 percent from carbon free sources by 2045. Note the language used here, "carbon free" includes nuclear and as well as coal and natural gas equipped with carbon capture and sequestration technologies. These goals are ambitious for NM considering that it gets half of its electricity from the coal sector.

Much of the bill is a direct response to San Juan Generating station, a coal-fired power plant that announced that two years ago that it would shut down the plant in 2022 because it was not economically viable. The bill is only accelerating the process and placing other power plants in the state on more shakier economic ground.

This bill creates a framework that allows utilities to take out 'energy transition bonds' to cover the costs associated with shutting down the plants. However, the bonds will be paid by ratepayers--the customers of the public utility--not the taxpayers. This is important in order to avoid burdening the state's taxpayers and it's imperative for supporting the more than 450 workers--a quarter of whom are Native American--through a transition when the San Juan Generating Station closes.

Therefore the bill allocates up to \$ 30 million for reclamation costs, and up to \$40 million to help displaced workers and affected communities , to be shared with Energy Transition Indian Affairs Fund, Economic Development Assistance Fund and Displaced Worker Assistance Fund.

New York

Known as the most comprehensive and aggressive climate change legislation in the nation, New York passed the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) in July of 2019. Sponsored by Sen. Todd Kemansky, New York's CLCPA establishes economy-wide and electric sector targets for reducing GHG emissions and scaling up clean energy in hopes to transform and strengthen New York's economy. Major provisions include a mandate to all sectors of the economy to commit to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, a codification of ambitious electric sector targets, and the creation of the Climate Action Council. Comprised of 22 heads of different state agencies and experts appointed by the Governor, the council's purpose is to create a scoping plan to reduce emissions across all sectors of the economy.

The plan specifically speaks to environmental justice by establishing a Climate Justice Working Group. With the target for disadvantaged communities to receive 40 percent of the overall benefits from the state's climate programs, the Climate Justice Working Group will advise the Climate Action Council and establish the final criteria for identifying disadvantaged communities based on considerations related to public health, environmental hazards, and socioeconomic factors. Members of this working group include leaders from state agencies, like Rosa Mendes, the Director of Environmental Justice for the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, and grassroots environmental justice leaders, such as Eddie Bautista, the executive director of the NYC Environmental Justice Alliance.

Washington

On May 7th, 2019 Washington legislators passed SB 5116, an act relating to supporting Washington's clean energy economy and transitioning to a clean, affordable, and reliable energy future. Sponsored by 18 Washington senators who are in agreement that by 2030, the state must be 100 percent carbon-neutral. According to this bill, eighty percent of Washington's power must come from non-emitting electric generation and electricity from renewable resources.

This language is significant: it leaves room for nuclear, natural gas with carbon capture usage (CCS) or other nonrenewable, non-carbon-emitting sources. In other words, this is a clean energy bill, not a renewable energy bill.

The bill requires utilities to adopt the federal government's current social cost of carbon (SCC) as established in Executive Order 12866 – roughly \$68 per ton, rising to \$116 per ton by 2050 – at a discount rate of 2.5 percent. The SCC is a rough estimate created by economists to assess the damages caused by a ton of carbon emissions.

The bill adds several new considerations regarding equity to the regulatory compact, including equitable distribution of benefits, reduction of burdens to vulnerable communities (the bill also requires a Cumulative Impact Analysis to identify such communities), short-term and long-term public health, environmental benefits, energy resilience and security.

The Bill also requires that utilities in the state make funds available for low-income households. The goal is to reach 60 percent of eligible customers by 2030 and 90 percent by 2050. This component aligns the interests of utilities, energy developers, and unions behind the project of equitable decarbonization.

The bill establishes state tax incentives for clean energy projects to get unions on board by establishing three different tiers. The first tier is a 50 percent tax exemption for contracting with women, minority, or veteran-owned businesses and local residents in the area. The next tier is a 75 percent tax exemption for projects that meet the criteria mentioned above and ensure a wage that was collectively bargained for by the employees. The last tier is a 100 percent tax exemption for projects developed under a project labor agreement. PLAs ensure that a project will be completed either with a certain percentage of unionized labor and that the contract will first be offered to unions located closest to the site of the projec

Policies Proposed

California

Lauded as the leading state in sustainable policy and innovation, it may come as a surprise that California has not yet passed any Green New Deal legislation. California is one of multiple states currently facing a backlog in the legislation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In its original form, California's Green New Deal AB 1839 called on the state to adopt a policy framework committed to both advancing labor equity and dramatically reducing fossil fuel use. The bill also outlines the creation of a Green New Deal Council, appointed by the Governor, to develop specific recommendations by January 2022. This original proposal garnered support from many environmental organizations, such as 350.org, the Sunrise Movement, the Sierra Club, the Asian Pacific Environment Network, and many more.

In response to COVID-19, AB 1839 has shifted focus almost exclusively to rebuilding efforts in the aftermath of the global pandemic. As amended on May 7th, 2020 the omnibus bill is now called AB-1839 Economic, Environmental, and Social Recovery: California COVID 19 Recovery Deal. Though certain provisions related to environmental goals first introduced in the original version remain, the majority of the proposals concern the just and equitable allocation of recovery resources.

As currently drafted, the bill has removed all of its original principles and goals, including reducing severe climate change impacts, beginning a rapid managed decline of fossil fuels, and providing a blueprint for a Just Transition that would guarantee equal jobs and benefits for workers in a new green economy. These goals have been replaced with fiscal goals for funding the state's recovery from COVID-19. Fortunately, some of the spending rules for this COVID-19 recovery do prioritize some goals contained in the original bill. Examples include prohibiting businesses from accepting public funds for any long-term projects that emit GHGs or expand fossil fuel use, and adopting spending measures that require funding and workplace standards for a Just Transition.

Connecticut

Originally proposed in February 2020, Connecticut's SB 354 has remained stalled since March 2020. Championed by the Democratic co-chairs of the Labor and Public Employees Committee, Sen. Kushner and Sen. Porter, the bill's measures mirror those proposed in the federal Green New Deal policy.

The bill promises to lower greenhouse gases in the state by 80 percent by 2050, allocates 40 percent of benefits earmarked for disadvantaged communities, distributes 40 percent of energy efficiency funds to low and moderate income households, and sets a carbon price. The bill also touches on environmental justice concerns raised during public hearings. Many who spoke in favor of the legislation said that Connecticut's current energy policies disproportionately affect disadvantaged communities. The bill proposes the creation of an Environmental Equity Working Group to identify disadvantaged communities for pollution reduction.

Illinois

Illinois's general assembly is weighing a bill that sets an aggressive target of decarbonizing the state's energy by 2030 and running the state completely on renewable energy by 2050. That includes deploying more than 40 million solar panels and 2,500 wind turbines alongside \$20 billion in new infrastructure over the next decade. The bill also calls for cutting emissions from transportation and for vastly expanding the clean energy workforce.

The Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA) is co-sponsored by 50 members of the state house and 30 members of the state senate. Gov. Pritzker has previously voiced his support for the goal of 100 percent clean energy by 2050. The bill has the support of thousands of "citizen co-sponsors" from communities across the state. Supporters of the Illinois bill are arguing that addressing equity and social justice are required to build a coalition to back tough climate targets.

The Clean Energy Jobs Act (CEJA) builds on its earlier 2016 iteration, which created job training centers and allocated \$750 million for low-income communities to help them buy clean energy and make their homes more energy efficient. The new bill would create business incubators for energy contractors, aiming particularly at communities that may lose fossil fuel jobs, as well as communities of color.

CEJA includes Clean Energy Empowerment Zones that focus on communities that have relied on or have been affected by fossil fuel jobs and provide for a Just Transition to 100 percent renewable energy use. This includes new state economic development resources for new business tax incentives, workforce training, site clean-up and reuse, and help to ensure local tax revenue replacement.

Minnesota

The Minnesota Green New Deal bill was introduced on April 11, 2019 by state Rep. Frank Hornstein and Sen. Scott Dibble along with 17 co-sponsors. The Minnesota Green New Deal has three core elements. The first is to create a Climate Advisory Council to identify groups and individuals most in need of climate change mitigation, which includes job training programs for marginalized communities that focus on producing green goods and services

Second, setting a target that by 2030, all the electricity in MN will be carbon free. Lastly, no new development of fossil fuel infrastructures, including the controversial Line 3 pipeline.

Line 3 Pipeline is a proposed corridor that would cross waters and lands in northern Minnesota featuring extensive biodiversity, including 137 public lands, 76 public waterways, and the headwaters of the Mississippi River.

The last part of the GND regarding no new fossil fuel infrastructure has resulted in a lack of support from many labor unions since they are concerned that it will cause job losses

Therefore, unions in Minnesota have sided with Republicans and a contingent of centrists who support the oil pipeline over environmental advocates and progressive Democrats who oppose it.

North Carolina

North Carolina's HR 737 chooses a research approach to find transformative strategies for a just transition. Penned by the environmental activist group The Canary Coalition, the bill borrows the basic platform and language of Rep. Alexandra Ocasio Cortez's HR 109, the resolution for a federal Green New Deal introduced in 2019.

The Canary Coalition's resolution calls for a study commission to be created to determine the necessary steps to transform North Carolina's respective energy, transportation, and agricultural systems to 100 percent clean, safe, renewable energy within a 10 year period.

Executed by the new House Select Committee to Study Transformative Strategies for a New North Carolina, 12 members of North Carolina's House of Representatives will be charged with studying legislative changes and budgetary investments needed to achieve climate and environmental resilience outcomes within the next 10 years.

Specific measures include: dramatically expanding existing renewable power sources with the goal of meeting one hundred percent of statewide power through renewable energy resources, eliminating greenhouse gas emissions from major industries, and investing in local-scale agriculture in communities across the state.

The resolution proclaims that in the expansion of green technology, industry, and products, the committee aims to raise North Carolina to become the national leader in the transition to completely greenhouse gas neutral economies.

Also addressed in the resolution is the need for a Just Transition for employment by promoting job creation through implementation of a plan and policies that promote renewable energy, energy efficiency, and green technologies.

As it stands, HR 737 has been stalled in the committee on Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House since April 16, 2019. With primary sponsors Rep. Logan, Autry, Hawkins, and Insko, the resolution still has 17 sponsors and cosponsors in North Carolina's House of Representatives. It is unclear as to the main block on the Resolutions passing, other than the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rhode Island

One of Gov. Gina Raimondo's signature campaign promises during her 2018 re-election bid was to support the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA) (S658/H5444), sponsored by Sen. Euer and Rep. Blazejewski.

The GWSA would have created mandatory and enforceable carbon emissions reductions across three major sectors of Rhode Island's economy: energy generation, buildings, and transportation. The GWSA would have codified the goals that the General Assembly initially set in the 2014 Resilient Rhode Island Act, but the General Assembly seems uninterested in tackling the looming climate crisis, and thus was indifferent at best about voting to approve the GWSA.

The GWSA had hearings on both sides but was never considered to be voted out of committee. Gov. Gina Raimondo claimed that state agencies did not have the resources to develop and implement these desperately-needed measures. With no momentum in the State House, our elected officials put off action on climate for yet another year.

The GWSA was not the only attempt by legislators to create policy around carbon emissions. The Economic and Climate Resilience Act, (S662/H5889), sponsored by Sen. Sosnowski and Rep. Bennett and more commonly known as the Carbon Pricing Bill, was introduced for the fourth straight year and failed to gain any traction. This act would establish a fee on companies that sell fossil fuel in Rhode Island and funds from the fee would go to support a Just Transition and resilience and energy programs.

Vermont

Vermont's S 311 takes a unique approach to creating their state's version of the Green New Deal. Penned by Sen. Polina, the current Chair of Vermont's Progressive Party, the act proposed the creation of a Green New Deal Fund. This fund seeks to generate 30 million a year from increasing the income tax on those making \$200,000 a year or more, or the top 5 percent of earners in Vermont.

These earners, about 16,000 Vermont tax filers, are the same individuals who have been benefiting from the Trump era's tax cuts, paying roughly \$240 million less in federal taxes per year. This fund would be used towards energy conservation programs, including expanding public transportation and weatherization. Disbursement to each program will be managed by a 12 member Vermont Green New Deal Board, which would include four legislators and eight citizens with expertise in transportation or green energy technologies who would decide how the money would be spent.

As it stands, S 311 has been stalled in the committee on Natural Resources and Energy since January 17th, 2020. The act has received criticism from environmental advocacy groups, such as 350Vermont organizers who want a shorter timeline for S 311 to be enacted. It can be assumed that the major cause of the act's stall in committee is related to COVID-19.

Virginia

On December 9th, 2019 the Green New Deal act was introduced by Democrat Sam Rasoul in the Virginia House. This act is supported by more than 60 coalition partners such as the NAACP and the non profit organization Clean Fairfax Council.

This Virginia legislation does not just address what are traditionally thought of as "environmental" issues. It recognizes the reality that communities of color are disproportionately targeted for polluting fossil fuel projects and are on the front lines of climate change worldwide.

The bill seeks to address these inequities by developing a Climate Action Plan, which requires that 40 percent of the funds directed toward combating climate change be allocated to frontline communities, and will establish a climate justice task force to develop and implement the plan.

The legislation also proposes establishing minimum energy efficiency goals for buildings in Virginia with the aim of improving energy efficiency by 2.4 percent per year starting in 2020 and by 36 percent in 2035. Another addition to the bill is creating a just transition framework that includes job training programs to switch workers from the fossil fuel industry, but also includes development of trade programs in high schools and community colleges.

The bill also creates a pathway for strong labor protections for workers in the clean energy sector, including mandatory project labor agreements, prevailing wage guarantees, protecting the right to organize a union, transitional assistance and retirement benefits. The bill also includes clean energy mandates that require retail electric suppliers in the state to generate 80 percent of the electricity from clean energy sources by 2028 and 100 percent by 2036.

Finally, this bill enacts a moratorium on new major fossil fuel projects starting in 2021, including any new generating facility, export terminal or pipeline that relies on any fossil fuel resource or expansion of any existing such facility.

Final Analysis

Case	Just Transition for Labor	Green Energy	Green Infrastructure	Support from Stakeholders	Emissions Reductions
Maine					
New York					
Vermont					
Connecticut					
California					
North Carolina					



Addresses category directly



Briefly mentions category, no direct plan



Does not address category directly

Case	Just Transition for Labor	Green Energy	Green Infrastructure	Support from Stakeholders	Emissions Reductions
Washington					
New Mexico					
Virginia					
Rhode Island					
Illinois					
Minnesota					



Addresses category directly



Briefly mentions category, no direct plan



Does not address category directly

Final Thoughts

Due to the Covid- 19 pandemic, many of these proposed bills have not had the opportunity to be voted on. Others, such as California's AB 1839, have been completely rewritten in response to COVID 19 relief efforts. While navigating the political system during a global pandemic, we as activists must continue to apply pressure on our government officials to encourage more action on these bills in 2021.

One finding of particular interest is that those states that tend to reflect stronger Republican influences were more likely to propose Green New Deals that centered a Just Transition for labor. This was a phenomenon not in evidence in those states that lean Democratic. According to our analysis, 8 out of the 12 states had a plan on how to transition workers from the coal and oil industry. These states are aware that the industry is dying, and taking action to plan for a transition away from fossil fuels is unavoidable. Coalitions of environmentalists and labor unions are needed in order to ensure a Just Transition for those states.

With a new administration, the possibility of a federal Green New Deal may come to fruition in the next four years. Until then, we must continue to hold our local politicians accountable to creating policy that ensures a Just Transition from fossil fuel dependency to green alternatives.

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