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### The Green New Deal: An Intersectional Approach to Solving Climate Change

Climate change is one of the most pertinent issues facing our country and our globe in the modern era, its existence proved by scientists and the costs it poses to our nation becoming ever clearer as we head into the future. Climate change and global warming, from a scientific standpoint, are gradually increasing global temperatures and changing weather patterns for the extreme. The EPA reports that average temperatures in the continental United States have been rising since 1901, with eight of the top ten hottest years on record occurring in the last 20 years. Climate change is defined as the overall shift in weather patterns over time, and can be correlated with global warming; for example, cyclone activity on the eastern seaboard has increased in the last 20 years as well due to increasing surface level ocean temperatures which cause more intense tropical storms and hurricanes to form (EPA, 2017). Other measurable impacts of climate change include extreme temperatures and single-day precipitation events, as well as higher frequency of natural disasters such as wildfires.

The EPA states that this positive climate forcing (warming) effect has been driven by greenhouse gases, most prominently carbon dioxide, which are primarily emitted by the burning of fossil fuels for the electric and transportation industries. These indicators have recently pushed a need for policy change which will lessen the United States' impact on the environment. A proposal introduced just this year to Congress, named the Green New Deal, may be able to

improve the US environmental impact while also addressing the employment needs of marginalized populations.

According to Lisa Friedman for the New York Times, the Green New Deal, named after Roosevelt's historic New Deal for US recovery from the Great Depression, strives to "reduce greenhouse gas emissions... while also trying to fix societal problems like economic inequality and racial injustice" (Friedman, 2019). To achieve goals of net-zero emissions by 2050, the deal's founders Rep. Ocasio-Cortez (NY) and Sen. Markey (MA) call on policymakers to launch 10 years worth of initiatives in reducing carbon emissions. These will include switching 100% of the nation's power to renewable sources, digitizing the power grid, upgrading buildings to be more energy efficient, and investing in electric modes of transportation such as electric cars and high speed trains (Friedman, 2019). The resolution, however, also asks some controversial sacrifices of some sectors; for example, the agriculture industry is currently a leading producer of the greenhouse gas methane, and the Green New Deal states they will be working with industry leaders to reduce those emissions rates as much as is feasible (Friedman, 2019) by supporting family farming and safe land-use practices, as well as "building a more sustainable food system that ensures universal access to healthy food" (United States, 2019). These initiatives are all admirable goals which, if achieved, will surely curb some fraction of climate change, but there is a multidimensional aspect to this bill which makes it more appealing.

The Green New Deal is unique in the realm of climate change solutions in that it finds an intersectional problem to address along with climate change, economic and social injustice. The bill itself claims that climate change and subsequent environmental instability have "exacerbated systemic racial, regional, social, environmental, and economic injustices... by disproportionately

affecting... ‘frontline and vulnerable communities’” (United States, 2019). Such communities mentioned include communities of color, low-income workers, and the unhoused, among many others. These people are currently dependent on fossil fuel energy sources for access to power and jobs, but the deal’s movement towards universal environmental sustainability will hopefully move them away from this dependence. The Green New Deal seeks to create millions of high paying jobs in sustainable sectors and provide economic and social security for these populations to end these systemic injustices (United States, 2019). This side of the bill is crucial to note because it highlights the duality of these initiatives: to improve the lives of many marginalized people while also improving the climate.

Limitations in the proposal’s construction exist and are also It is important to note that the deal was originally written in a fairly vague way, avoiding endorsement of specific technologies so as to appeal to a wider audience (Friedman, 2019). Those who oppose the deal might make arguments questioning this vagueness, for example, why it fails to call for the full elimination of fossil fuels while attempting to move forward with a net-zero emissions goal. The answer is compromise; the vague phrasing of the document “could ease the tension between two key elements of the Democratic base: labor groups that support oil, gas and coal projects and environmental groups that oppose them” (Colman, 2019), or at least until more concrete legislation can be laid out to execute the proposal. Others argue that the project is too expensive of an undertaking, but a study reported by Yale Climate Connections estimates that in a worst case global warming scenario, in which politicians do nothing to slow fossil fuel production and carbon emissions, by 2090 twenty two impacted economic sectors will cost the government \$224

billion more per year than if they decide to follow a more sustainable pathway with less pollution.

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