

Dear Texas Representatives Henry Cuellar, Marc Veasey, Lizzie Fletcher, and Vicente Gonzalez,

We appreciate your concern for tackling the historic crises our nation faces, notably the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic fallout from it, and climate change. As young Texans facing the brunt of these interlocking crises, we know that we can't solve any one of these issues on their own or by trying to return to the past. Your suggestion that fossil fuel extraction will address these crises is incorrect, and we condemn that suggestion in the strongest possible terms. The best way to address these challenges together is by investing in a Green New Deal for Texas.

A Green New Deal would ensure no worker is left behind in the transition to a renewable energy economy. There is so much work to do retrofitting our homes and buildings, creating cleaner and more accessible transit systems, preserving ecosystems, expanding renewable energy across the state, doing low-carbon care work as teachers, artists, and nurses, and more. Federal investments at a minimum of \$2 trillion over 4 years, as promised in President Biden's Build Back Better Agenda, would create millions of well-paying, union jobs in Texas and across the country. Not only will these investments create jobs, they will protect Texas ranching, reduce utility costs for Texan homeowners and renters, and improve air quality for all Texans.

Public support for Green New Deal programs is growing rapidly. 69% of the public supports a Green Jobs Guarantee.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Biden's Build Back Better plan to invest some of the \$7 trillion in creating 10 million clean-energy jobs is very popular—53% of voters support the Biden clean energy investment plan, even after hearing Republican arguments against it.<sup>2</sup> Biden's plan for green jobs also echoes the Just Transition Fund's coal transition platform, an agenda that has been endorsed by 80 groups, including environmental and labor groups.<sup>3</sup>

Racial disparities and the effect of air pollution show why we must build back better, rather than return to the past. Congressman Veasey's district is home to Dallas Independent School District, where a leading cause of absenteeism is asthma.<sup>4</sup> Covid-19 is also more deadly in neighborhoods with higher levels of air pollution.<sup>5</sup> Continuing our reliance on fossil fuels is a recipe for disaster that has already made it more difficult for children to learn and created the conditions for so many Covid-19 deaths. In light of these facts, it is beyond disappointing to see

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<sup>1</sup> McElwee, S., NoiseCat, J., & Ray, J. (2020, May 06). The Coronavirus Pandemic Has Made Voters More Supportive of the Green New Deal. Retrieved January 29, 2021, from <https://www.dataforprogress.org/blog/5/5/coronavirus-makes-voters-support-gnd>

<sup>2</sup> Deiseroth, D. (2020, August 06). Battleground Senate Voters Support Bold Climate Action. Retrieved January 31, 2021, from <https://www.dataforprogress.org/memos/battleground-senate-voters-support-bold-climate-action>

<sup>3</sup> Gearino, D., Cohen, I., Bruggers, J., Fahys, J., Lavelle, M. (2020, July 15). Biden's \$2 Trillion Climate Plan Promotes Union Jobs, Electric Cars and Carbon-Free Power. Retrieved January 31, 2021, from <https://insideclimatenews.org/news/15072020/joe-biden-climate-plan-coronavirus-build-back-better/>

<sup>4</sup> Kheris, H., Jack, K., Johson, J., Vallamsundar, S., Dadashova, B. & Nieuwenhuijsen, M. (2019). Breathe Easy Dallas. *Environmental Epidemiology*, 3, 197. doi:10.1097/01.ee9.0000607992.28967.e9

<sup>5</sup> Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. (2020, November 10). Coronavirus and Air Pollution. Retrieved January 29, 2021, from <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/c-change/subtopics/coronavirus-and-pollution/>

your letter cite its data from The American Petroleum Institute, fossil fuel lobbyists who are profiting off of these crises. We should end subsidies and systems that allow fossil fuel CEOs to line their pockets while propping up a failing industry and harming Texans. Instead we should invest in a future that will improve the health of our communities.

We must also end our reliance on fossil fuels because it is undeniable that climate disasters are ravaging Texas. Hurricane Harvey alone dropped more water on Houston than goes over Niagara Falls in a year, cost over \$130 billion in damages, displaced over 30,000 people, destroyed over 200,000 homes and businesses,<sup>6</sup> killed at least 45 people<sup>7</sup>, and adversely affected countless more lives.

We know the solutions to these challenges: large investments in renewable energy, retrofitting homes, regenerative agriculture, modernizing the electric grid, and a just transition for fossil fuel workers and their communities. These investments will ensure Texans breathe clean air, drink clean water, and secure a livable future from the Gulf Coast to the Rocky Mountains and desert in El Paso.

We are in the midst of an unprecedented economic and climate crisis. The status quo is killing our communities and jobs. If you are serious about fighting for the wellbeing of Texans, for the creation of good, union jobs to tackle racial and economic inequality, and to stopping the climate crisis, will you swear off your fossil fuel donations and support a historic green recovery to show Texans that you are fighting for us, not corporate CEOs?

Sincerely,  
Sunrise Dallas  
Sunrise Houston  
Sunrise Katy  
Sunrise Austin  
Sunrise El Paso  
Sunrise Tarrant  
Sunrise University of Texas - Dallas  
Sunrise Denton  
Sunrise Rio Grande Valley

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<sup>6</sup> NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) U.S. Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters. (2021). Retrieved January 29, 2021, from <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/billions/events/US/1980-2017>

<sup>7</sup> Carroll, R., & Dart, T. (2017, September 01). Houston residents begin 'massive' cleanup as Harvey death toll hits 45. Retrieved January 29, 2021, from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/sep/01/hurricane-harvey-death-toll-rises-houston-residents-return>