

Comparison of Green New Deal Resolutions

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With the recent controversy between the Sunrise visit to Senator Feinstein's office, it came to my attention that a) Americans don't know much about civics, b) read very little, c) don't know how to Google or d) navigate thomas.loc.gov (or even know it exists), and e) know even less than all that about [climate science](#).

The amount of idiocy I have witnessed over the past two days since this "story" broke is unsurprising. But let me take the time to share with you all what I found.

EDUCATOR'S NOTE: I have been asked if educators can feel free to copy or refer to this document for their classes and students. BY ALL MEANS DO! You are free to. However, note that I am not a legal scholar or environmental scientist. I recommend you do your own analysis and know that [Your Mileage May Vary \(YMMV\)](#). My apologies in advance for any swear words sprinkled throughout.

[My warning to young people](#)

This needs to be repeated: Watch out for so-called adults trying to use fear & misinformation to drive their pet agendas. YES. Climate change is real. NO. You won't all be dead in 10 years. The axe grinding by some adults and the way they exploit kids is shameful.

So my advice to young people reading this on Twitter: don't let yourself be used as a pawn by anyone. Do your research. Learn civics. To adults in the room: don't blow your moments doing click-baity shitty "actions" that don't really address the issue.

Congress. How does it work?

Seeing the sterling current occupant of the White House, it should be globally unsurprising to say that America has become one of the [stupidest countries on Earth](#). We have very little knowledge of our own political system, and thusly, people are being snookered constantly with false promises.

So for all the people who have been promulgating the idea that voting for a resolution is going to save the planet — IT WON'T. [As I said on Twitter, repeatedly](#), resolutions are non-binding and unfunded. Just a "Sense of the Senate" (or House). An axiom for policy, upon which future *legislation* can be laid. Reminder to people who don't understand Congress: *neither* AOC's or DiFi's resolutions are binding, funded legislation. They are *resolutions*, not *bills*. So all of this is posturing without a point.

To quote from the [United States Senate site](#) itself:

Simple Resolutions

Simple resolutions are designated H.Res. and S.Res., followed by a number. A simple resolution addresses matters entirely within the prerogative of one house, such as revising the standing rules of one Chamber. Simple resolutions are also used to express the sentiments of a single house, such as offering condolences to the family of a deceased member of Congress, or it may give "advice" on foreign policy or other executive business. Simple resolutions do not require the approval of the other house nor the signature of the president, and they do not have the force of law.

Putting in an S. or H.R. (proposing a *bill*) is the first step to making a law -- "I got a twenty in my pocket. Let's go get ice cream." An S.Res or H.Res (a *resolution*) only says "We like ice cream."

The Green New Deal (GND) currently is a pair of non-binding H.Res./S.Res (see below for references). Dianne Feinstein wants to introduce her own alternative. Yet if we pass these resolutions -- *nothing changes*. A resolution is no more than a pledge to do something sometime. It's not even a pinky swear. A resolution *cannot* be signed into law. So all of this posturing is an urgency without activity.

Resolutions do not contain any legislation, budget, or actionable path forward. They are no more than statements-of-principles. Even changing the name of a post office has more weight of law. Single-cameral H.Res. and S.Res. have zero weight of law. A non-binding S.Res. won't save a bee, a whale or a glacier.

I hope I made my point.

To save the country and the planet, we need a CBO scored [bill](#). (Or, more likely, a series of bills, since this is unlikely to fit into a single omnibus bill.)

A side-by-side comparison

AOC's plan (H.Res. 109) (also Markey's S.Res. 59)

What it proposes:

- Net-zero greenhouse gasses through 100% renewable energy
- Millions of good, high-wage jobs
- Invest in the infrastructure and industry of the U.S.

- Clean air, water, climate, community resiliency, healthy food, access to nature, sustainable environment
- Promote justice and equity (ending oppression of “frontline and vulnerable communities”)
- Enact and enforce trade rules with environmental protections
- Ensure public lands, waters and oceans are protected
- *Provide everyone with high-quality healthcare**
- *Provide everyone in the US with affordable housing*
- *Guarantee everyone with a family-sustaining wage*
- *Guaranteed family and medical leave and paid vacation*
- *Strengthen rights to unionize*
- Stop transfer of jobs and pollution overseas
- *Grow domestic manufacturing in the US*
- Do all this in 10 years
- How do we get there? Doesn’t say.
- How do we fund it? Doesn’t say.

* I add these italicized sections. Note that these have nothing to do, per se, with the environment, and in the case of growing domestic manufacturing, might actually set us back.

Dianne Feinstein’s Plan

What it proposes:

- Net-zero greenhouse gas emissions “as soon as possible and by no later than 2050” (31 years)
- Instituting a “price on carbon” that increases over time
- Accelerate pace of research & development
- Manage land use to avoid new demand for energy
- Transition to zero-emission electricity sources, electric-drive surface transport, and efficient transmission, distribution and storage of electricity.
- Eliminate “avoidable emissions” from industry, commerce, residential buildings, aviation, shipping, agriculture; alternative cement and steel production; carbon neutral alternative fuels, etc.
- Carbon sinks including reforestation, forest and agricultural soil management, carbon mineralization, and direct air capture.
- Rejoin Paris Climate Agreement.
- Improve vehicle standards to >50 MPG by 2025
- Restore Clean Power Plan (reduce emissions from power sector)
- Restore EPA standards from the Clean Air Act for new, modified or reconstructed power plants
- Resume development of energy efficiency standards for HVAC, UPS, light bulbs, appliances and equipment
- Phase out hydrofluorocarbons as per Kigali Agreement (Montreal Protocol)
- Methane emission standards for oil and gas sector
- Restore waste prevention rule for venting & flaring
- Reinstate working group on Social Cost of Carbon
- Rebuild infrastructure for resiliency
- Fortify coastal communities
- Identify alternate supplies of drinking water

- Develop crop & agricultural standards to maintain reliable supply of food for globe
- Develop conservation practices & genetic catalogs for biodiversity
- Public health sector preparations for diseases, asthma, heat stroke, etc.
- International mutual aid framework for pre-disaster mitigation & post disaster relief
- Plan for implications of a navigable Arctic Ocean
- Just & equitable transition for all communities, including retirement or retraining support for coal, oil and gas employees.
- Good, high-wage jobs
- Deal with communities suffering localized pollution
- Respecting local communities, esp. historically marginalized or oppressed
- Minimize speed & extents of effects of climate change
- It doesn't say how some of these things will be done.
- How do we fund it? Not clear apart from implementing a "price on carbon."

My \$0.02

Reading over them both, Dianne Feinstein's plan is far less aggressive when it comes to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. Some will see that as "realistic," and others will lambaste her as "useless." Dianne's plan does not preclude doing things earlier than that, but I can see how some people are way too freaking antsy and panicked to actually listen to what they would see as "gradualism" and others would say are "achievable" plans.

Sen. Feinstein's plan has a *lot more* specificity of language in terms of reinstating or recommitting ourselves to existing laws and treaties that the Trump administration axed or are simply pretending don't apply to them. Rep. Ocasio-Cortez talks about "existing law," but doesn't have much in terms of citing specifics.

Both of them have pretty much the same sort of language in many places ("good, high-wage jobs" and protections for "historically marginalized or oppressed" communities). In a way, in a rational world, you'd reconcile these two separate resolutions with friendly amendments.

Sen. Feinstein's plan additionally touches on the issues of transitioning people away from fossil fuels in their jobs. Pension guarantees and retraining programs. That's a smart move which could pull in various votes you'd otherwise have as adversaries.

Edit (24 Feb 2019): I was pointed to some additional provisions in AOC's plan I skipped the first time and added them in. They have to do with *guaranteed* jobs (sufficient to afford a family), healthcare, paid leave, rights to unionize to all Americans *and affordable housing*. How will the Federal government guarantee these jobs and benefits? And *housing*? While I support a living wage and higher minimum wage, I personally believe this is where the AOC plan goes beyond a "green" new deal and tries to simply do too much. Again, depending on your own personal politic, this might be what you love best about the plan, but I would argue that it has nothing to do with "green" solutions, and more to do with lining it with a "chicken in every pot" promises.

Feinstein's plan simply tries to focus on climate change mitigation, adoption of green energy and clean transportation, and environmental protections without overhauling the entire U.S. economy from the ground up.

Summary

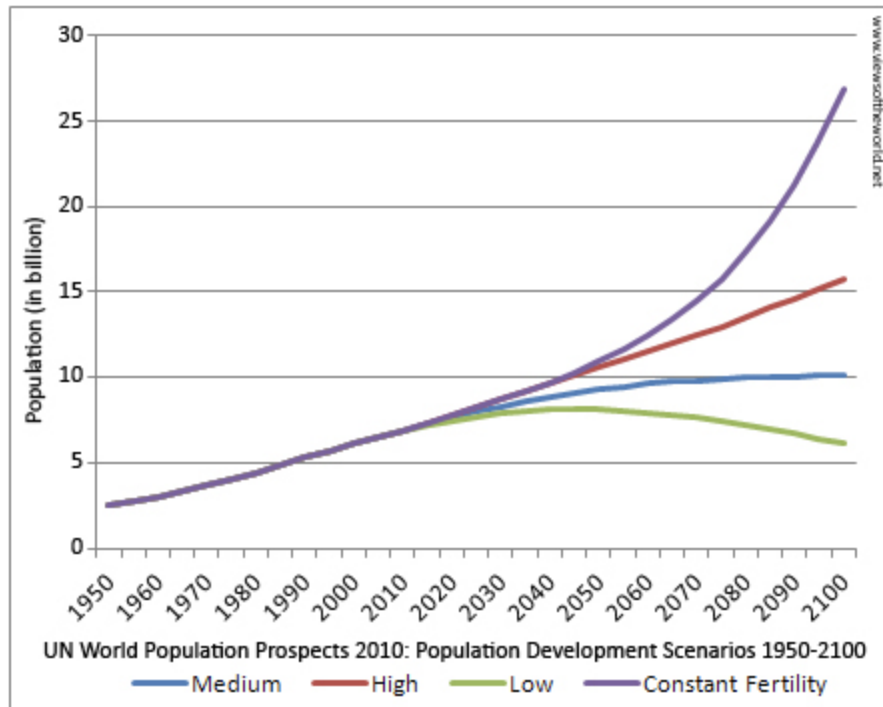
For the Green New Deal: Take all this to the next level. Get yourself far more informed on the legislative process than you already seem to be. Do your damned homework before you show up at a Senator's office and make a non-binding resolution a "do-or-die" demand. Don't needlessly panic children that they will be dead in ten years if a *non-binding resolution with zero budget appropriation* does or doesn't pass.

Also, let us collectively get far less stupid. Get together with other people and review what's already on the books that the Trump administration is ignoring. Look at what's already proposed. Check in with your local Representative or Senator and — *without threatening them* — ask what proposed legislation they have already in the works. Then, when given copies, READ IT.

If you are part of a community action group, workshop potential draft legislation. Learn your civics and realize how to get what you want put into actual effective legislation. Learn about the budgetary process.

For the love of God: Stop with the left-on-left violence. Stop shivving each other. Stop throwing elbows. Stop trying to primary people who are already on your team. Stop with the "gotcha" videos and the appeals to emotion. "THINK OF THE CHILDREN!" Stop it.

Lastly, I know the stakes. To deal with climate change, we need to remain the party of science and rationality. If we Chicken Little — "the world will be over in 10 years!" — we'll look like idiots when it isn't over.



I am fully aware of the dramatic issues of climate change and have been warning for years on the issue. We can get to 2100 with 15 billion mostly healthy-happy humans or plunge back to 5 billion mired in war and misery. Or we can muddle along and maybe somehow get to 10 billion in various states of war and peace, prosperity and poverty, sickness and health. We could see World Wars III, IV and V over basic survival resources. I get the stakes. Been warning about it for decades.

It is my hope that people become far more active and engaged, yet also *better informed* and *effective* when they do engage.

If you disagree with me after all this, that's fine. Find me on Twitter at [@PeterCorless](https://twitter.com/PeterCorless) and tell me why. Bring good ideas. Trolls will be blocked. But I am always up for a good spirited, well-intentioned discussion.

References

- [H.Res.109 - Recognizing the duty of the Federal Government to create a Green New Deal](#). Rep. Ocasio-Cortez, Alexandria [D-NY14], introduced 02/07/2019
- [S.Res. 59 - A resolution recognizing the duty of the Federal Government to create a Green New Deal](#). Sen. Markey, Edward J [D-MA], introduced 02/07/2019
- [Draft Climate Change Resolution, Office of Senator Dianne Feinstein, February 22, 2019](#) (not yet in thomas.loc.gov)