

Quiz: Make a Match

1. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
 2. Franklin D. Roosevelt
 3. The Great Depression
 4. Works Progress Administration
 5. Social Security
 6. The New Deal
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- a. A New Deal government program to guarantee pensions to elderly and disabled people.
 - b. Congresswoman elected in 2018, who has proposed a new congressional committee to plan a Green New Deal.
 - c. A time of worldwide economic crisis after World War 1, from 1929-1939, in which the stock market crashed and 20% of Americans could not find work.
 - d. A set of expansive new government programs that President Roosevelt began in 1933 in order to help fight the Great Depression by regulating banks, making it easier for workers to organize into unions, directly providing jobs, and subsidizing the economy.
 - e. President of the United States from 1933 until 1945, who began the New Deal in response to the Great Depression.
 - f. A New Deal government program to provide jobs to unemployed people by building highways, parks, schools, and more.

Reading: Green New Deal

A recent report from the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change found that the world has only 12 years to cut carbon emissions in half, by 2030, or we will be on track to experience a disastrous 2 degrees Celsius of global warming as soon as the year 2040. (Two degrees Celsius converts to 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit.)

In response to this situation, newly-elected Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, representing the Bronx and Queens, has proposed a new Congressional committee charged with putting together a plan for a Green New Deal. This Green New Deal would be a “detailed national, industrial, economic mobilization plan for the transition of the United States economy to become greenhouse gas emissions neutral and to significantly draw down greenhouse gases from the atmosphere and oceans and to promote economic and environmental justice and equality.” The committee would produce a concrete plan within one year that would have the goal of moving the U.S. to 100% renewable energy sources by January 2030, across all industries, housing, and transportation. Currently, the U.S. gets [18% of its electricity from renewable sources](#).

The Green New Deal is inspired by the New Deal, a broad set of policies passed during the Great Depression to address widespread poverty and unrest. The programs of the New Deal [reflect demands](#) that had been made for years by labor activists, women’s groups, and a wide range of activist organizations across the country. The New Deal was highly controversial when it first passed. It included laws to regulate banks, increase employment, support the poor and elderly, and empower workers to organize unions. New Deal programs included the Works Progress Administration, which hired unemployed people to build many of our nation’s highways, hydropower dams, post offices, schools, and parks. Another New Deal program was the Social Security Administration, which provided a safety net for elderly and disabled Americans for the first time. All of these programs were a major change from previous efforts to provide for the general welfare of people through free-market strategies. Instead, the New Deal directly provided jobs and subsidies to people and communities.

Similarly, the Green New Deal would “provide all members of our society, across all regions and all communities, the opportunity, training, and education to be a full and equal participant in the transition [to a green economy], including through a job guarantee program to assure a living wage job to every person who wants one.” These new jobs would work to transition the U.S. to 100% renewable energy by building new systems for generating, storing, and transmitting energy, by remodeling homes and buildings to be more energy-efficient, and by producing new systems for removing greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

[A recent poll by Yale](#) shows that 81 percent of registered voters in America (including 92 percent of Democrats and 64 percent of Republicans) support this idea of a Green New Deal.

The original New Deal was a massive investment in the U.S.’s infrastructure and economy. Adding all its programs together, Roosevelt’s [New Deal cost about half a trillion dollars](#) over the 1930’s, in today’s money. Meanwhile, the cost of the proposed Green New Deal transition to 100% renewable energy [could be at least \\$2 trillion](#).

However, the Green New Deal would cost less relative to the size of the whole U.S. economy than the New Deal did back in the 1930s. The Green New Deal's \$2 trillion cost would be about 10 percent of the U.S.'s 2017 GDP (gross domestic product). By comparison, Roosevelt's New Deal cost about 40 percent of the U.S.'s 1929 GDP. (The government-funded mobilization of industry and jobs for World War 2 just a few years later, [cost about \\$4 trillion](#) in today's dollars, an even larger investment.)

In short, the Green New Deal would be expensive, but it would not require nearly as much of a relative increase as Roosevelt's New Deal did at the time. That New Deal was funded by large new taxes on the rich, which Roosevelt called a Wealth Tax. The wealthiest Americans paid up 75% of their income in taxes. Today, the top tax rate is 37% (for people with an annual income of over half a million a year).

Roosevelt's [New Deal has been criticized](#) for disproportionately benefitting whites while excluding Black and Latino citizens. For example, the Federal Housing Administration, a New Deal program for providing home mortgages, made it very difficult for African-Americans to get federally-backed mortgages and own their own homes, through a discriminatory practice called [redlining, as well as other practices](#). Furthermore, the Social Security program did not at first include agricultural workers and domestic workers (such as maids and nannies), categories that included 90 percent of African-American workers at the time. As a result, African-Americans did not benefit equally from the investment dollars of the New Deal.

By contrast, the Green New Deal proposal insists on "a 'just transition' for all workers, low-income communities, communities of color, indigenous communities, rural and urban communities, and the front-line communities most affected by climate change, pollution and other environmental harm." Because climate change and pollution are particularly harmful to low-income and marginalized people who have fewer resources to protect themselves, supporters of the Green New Deal argue that any plan for massive investment and economic transition must include and support these groups and their needs.

Democratic leaders in the House of Representatives have not yet agreed to actually create the Green New Deal committee. Instead, incoming Speaker of the House [Nancy Pelosi announced](#) a different Climate Crisis committee that will have the goal of reducing air pollution, creating green technology jobs, and preventing the social instability caused by climate change. Critics of this alternate plan point out that without a specific goal of drafting a Green New Deal, this committee is unlikely to have much impact, like past congressional committees focused on climate change.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez [wrote on Twitter on Dec. 31, 2018](#): "A few weeks ago, I joined youth activists in a specific demand for a Green New Deal Committee. It had 3 simple elements: 1. No fossil fuel money on climate cmte [committee]. 2. Offer solutions for impacted communities 3. Draft sample #GreenNewDeal. All 3 were rejected as 'too controversial.'"

The Congresswoman and her allies, including activists in the Sunrise Movement, say they will keep fighting for a Green New Deal. Ocasio-Cortez said the movement would support Pelosi and others who pushed for "100% renewable energy," but would also organize [primary election challenges](#) aimed at replacing Congress members who fail to support the Green New Deal with Congress members who do.

Discussion Questions

- What similarities and differences do you notice between Roosevelt's New Deal and the Green New Deal?
- What crisis was Roosevelt's New Deal responding to in the 1930s? What modern-day crisis would the Green New Deal respond to?
- How was the New Deal's strategy different from previous efforts to support the economy? How would the Green New Deal's strategy be different from previous efforts to fight climate change?
- Why do you think both New Deals include public jobs programs?
- Why might Roosevelt's New Deal programs have faced stiff opposition in their day? Why might some people disagree with the Green New Deal today?
- Why do you think House Democratic leaders are proposing a Climate Crisis committee instead of a Green New Deal committee?
- Should we support the Green New Deal? If so, how?