

350 Action 2019 Candidate Questionnaire

Alex Morse

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About You

Your Name: Alex Morse (MA-01)

What office are you running for, and as which party?: *Democratic candidate for Congress, MA-01*

Policy Positions

Do you support a Green New Deal that ends fossil fuels and provides an immediate and just transition to 100% renewable energy? Explain what that means to you.

Yes. According to the IPCC 2018 Special Report, unless we keep global temperatures from rising 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrialized levels, we will not be safe from the most severe impacts of climate change, some of which we are already seeing. This threat calls for political courage and bold policies. That is why the Green New Deal is a cornerstone of my campaign and why, when I am in Congress, I will work with Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to pass a Green New Deal that supports a just transition to 100% clean, renewable energy.

A Green New Deal means two things. First, it means adopting a climate policy framework that centers environmental justice and empowers, prioritizes, and directly engages frontline communities who are disproportionately affected by climate change, including indigenous peoples, communities of color, migrant communities, deindustrialized communities, depopulated rural communities, the poor, low-income workers, women, the elderly, the unhoused, people with disabilities, and youth. Second, it means a mass mobilization of resources, at a scale that we have not seen since FDR's New Deal policies, to combat the existential threat of the climate crisis. These resources would be used to directly mitigate climate change, to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure in a way that strengthens community resilience, to protect and support our most vulnerable communities, and to transition workers out of the fossil fuel economy.

As Mayor, I committed Holyoke to become the first 100% renewable energy city in Massachusetts, even though we have the lowest median household income in the state. This is because my administration recognizes the immediate threat of climate change, as well as the opportunity that exists for equitable economic revitalization within a Green New Deal and a green economy. My commitment is not a plan that is sitting on a shelf, but a policy that is already in action. I will expand further in question 3, but we are in the midst of an ambitious energy transition plan and working with both grassroots and national partners to work towards 100% renewables and an eventual net-zero city.

How will you center racial, economic and social justice in your climate policies?

As Mayor of Holyoke, I have worked to ensure that racial, economic, and social justice are at the center of all of my policies. The City of Holyoke is 50% Hispanic/Latinx, yet for decades, representation in City Hall and City Commissions was minimal. Today, three of the four members of the Mayor's Office are fluent in Spanish, and five city departments are led by people who identify as Hispanic or Latinx and speak Spanish. Since I took office, the percentage of persons of color on city boards and commissions has increased from 8 to 36%, and the percentage of women represented on the same boards has doubled from 24 to 48%. Improving representation and bringing marginalized and historically underrepresented communities to the table has allowed the city to tackle projects with our residents, not for our residents - a practice I will take with me to Congress. Expanded representation in governance has allowed for greater representation in policy action. For the first time in decades, my administration was able to invest in new parks, lights and sidewalks in neighborhoods which had been neglected for decades, thanks to the support and empowered voices of individuals from all backgrounds. Our school department has rolled out dual-language programs which are over-subscribed and which we are seeking to expand. Moreover, an e-bike share system and new bike lanes have cut down on car trips and expanded accessibility in low-income neighborhoods.

Climate policy is no exception. Whether looking at mitigation, adaptation, or the energy transition, frontline communities who are disproportionately affected by climate change must be prioritized, empowered, and centrally involved in policy-making. As laid out clearly in the Green New Deal resolution, climate action cannot simply be seen as a means to combat the existential threat of the climate crisis; it must also be viewed as an opportunity to transform our country and economy into one that is racially, economically, and socially just. As Congressman, I plan to work within the framework outlined by Rep. Ocasio-Cortez to support climate action that moves us towards a more equal and equitable country.

Do you support a moratorium on all new fossil fuel infrastructure, including pipelines, fracked gas and oil, compressor stations and coal power plants? Please tell us with specifics what you'd do, if elected to stop the expansion of the fossil fuel industry and keep fossil fuels in the ground?

Yes. As Mayor of Holyoke, I have worked to close dirty fossil fuel facilities and have stood against the building of new gas infrastructure. In 2014, with the support of the community and local activists, I successfully worked to close Mount Tom Station - the last coal power plant in Massachusetts. In its place, Holyoke's Municipal Utility partnered with ENGIE North America to install a 17,000-panel solar farm equipped with storage capacity. This solar farm is the largest in the Commonwealth and represents a significant step in the ongoing effort to get Holyoke to carbon neutrality.

I have also been an advocate against new fossil fuel infrastructure that would further lock us into a fossil fuel economy. On April 22nd, 2019 - the 49th Earth Day - I called for a halt on new natural gas supply and pipeline infrastructure in the City of Holyoke. I made this stand at a time when Holyoke Gas and Electric (HG&E) sought to address new energy demand by negotiating a deal with Columbia Gas that would build additional pipeline infrastructure in Holyoke and other neighboring cities. In my statement, I said: "while the efforts of the HG&E are understandable, and I am mindful of the city's recent energy demands, I cannot in good conscience support the building of this pipeline. It constitutes a short-term fix to a long-term problem, and falls short of the moral imperatives of this moment in history."

In Congress, I will continue to use my position to advocate against new pipelines, fracked gas and oil, compressor stations and coal power plants - all of which offer short-sighted solutions which will keep us from combating climate change and transitioning to a green economy. I would also continue to push for the replacement of fossil fuel facilities with clean, renewable energy.

Do you support investigation of the fossil fuel industry's role in causing climate change, blocking climate action, and misleading the public? If so, do you have plans for a process to hold the industry financially accountable for that role and related harms?

Yes. For decades, fossil fuel companies have spent billions of dollars funding a campaign of climate denialism, lobbying against climate mitigation efforts, and corrupting our political system for their short-term gain. They did this all while knowing that their actions and products were directly contributing to the climate crisis and the destruction of our planet. In Congress, I will fully support the investigation of these companies - both criminal and civil - for any wrongdoing. As was done in the 1980s with the tobacco industry, companies must be held accountable for the damage that they have caused to our planet and the people of the world.

In addition to a full investigation into the wrongdoing of fossil fuel companies and their executives, I would also support actions to ensure that these actors cannot continue to destroy our climate. Such actions would include putting an end to the almost \$15 billion of subsidies the federal government gives to the fossil fuel industry every year; ending fossil fuel extraction on federal public lands; banning offshore drilling; and, requiring fossil fuel companies to repair all leaking infrastructure. States have already stepped up to combat these conglomerates, especially right here in Massachusetts, where Attorney General Healey has my full support in her continued lawsuit against Exxon Mobil. That said, state support can not tackle these conglomerates alone, the federal government can no longer support these companies in their environmentally devastating activities. It must hold them accountable.

Do you pledge to reject any contributions from the fossil fuel industry, as defined by the "No Fossil Fuel Money Pledge"?

Yes

Do you support plans to create an immigration policy that allows a path to citizenship for undocumented people?

Yes. We owe much of our nation's success to immigrants who built communities of tolerance and opportunity. This practice of tolerance and welcoming refugees has been attacked and vilified by Donald Trump and his supporters and we must reverse this. As Congressman, I will do this by supporting and advocating for the expansion of DACA and DAPA, the creation of a viable pathway to citizenship, the decriminalization of immigration, the defunding of ICE, the separation of immigration enforcement from law enforcement, the expansion of refugee quotas, and the immediate closure of for-profit detention centers.

As discussed below, immigration policy must be considered a part of a Green New Deal and a just transition. If we do not have a comprehensive and just immigration system, we will be unable to protect the members of our communities - documented and undocumented alike.

What are your specific plans on addressing the refugees and other migrants at the US borders?

I support immediate legislation to end for-profit detention centers. I support independent Article I immigration courts and more judges to clear backlogs of cases and remove the conflict of interest inherent in AG oversight of the courts. I will support the immediate reinstatement of DACA provisions and, most importantly, I will work on the continued expansion of legal immigration and a pathway to citizenship.

How do you see climate change impacting mass migrations and what are your plans to address the increase in refugees as a result of the climate crisis?

The City of Holyoke has already begun to see, firsthand, the mass migrations that will result if climate change is not addressed. In 2017, when Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico, over 4,000 residents of the Island sought refuge in our city because of the deep cultural ties we share with the Island. From this, we saw how the rapidly unfolding climate crisis has shrunk the distance between Western Massachusetts and the Caribbean. We are all at-risk if the climate crisis is not addressed. And if it is not, the problem of displacement will only become worse.

By 2100, the number of climate refugees is predicted to be between 100 million and 1 billion. Yet, while wealthy individuals and corporations in the U.S. and Europe are responsible for over half of all historical emissions - with other developed countries having contributed significantly as well -, communities most at risk of being forced to migrate as a result of climate change are in developing countries, or in low-income communities in the U.S. These communities bear little responsibility for the climate crisis, and yet are facing the most severe effects. This is an issue of climate justice and, just like we did in the City of Holyoke after Hurricane Maria, the U.S. has a responsibility to do its part to support and protect those who have lost their homes and been forced to relocate as a result of climate change and climate-change-induced natural disasters. This can be best achieved if we are able and ready to take in those victims.

Plans to accommodate and support climate refugees must be a key component of any effort to build community resilience against climate change and climate-related disasters. These plans must consider and support internal migration, as well as the immigration of refugees. In addition, the United States must engage in an international exchange of technology, expertise, products, funding, and services that will both prevent the need for migration and support other countries in responding to the displacement of their people as a result of climate change and climate-related disasters.

What are your plans for criminal justice reform?

I was the first Mayor in Massachusetts to champion the legalization of marijuana, not only for the economic benefit to our cities, but because of the decades of racial injustice brought by law enforcement, predominantly against communities of color. In addition to legalization, I have been a strong advocate for the full expungement of prior marijuana convictions. If elected, I will continue to advocate for criminal justice reform and an end to mass incarceration in Congress. Specifically, I would advocate for the legalization of marijuana on a federal level and the full expungement of prior marijuana convictions. I would also advocate for an end to cash-bail and a private, for-profit prison system which benefits from our people being locked away. Moreover, I would support increased oversight of police departments and activity, the reduction of unnecessarily long prison sentences, and the abolishment of the death penalty.

I fundamentally believe that our justice system should be focused on rehabilitation rather than punishment. For this reason, in addition to policies aimed at reducing the number of people who go through the justice system, I would also advocate for policies that support and re-enfranchise those who have been through that system. In particular, I would support giving formerly convicted felons the right to vote, banning the box on job applications which ask whether you have been convicted of a crime, and changing the law to ensure that previously convicted individuals have access to public housing, food stamps, and other government programs.

Do you support a worker's right to unionize?

Yes. Unions built the middle class in our country. Yet, over the past several decades, the systematic attack on unions by large corporations and right-wing politicians has led to a drastic decline in union membership. If we are to rebuild the middle class and reduce inequality, supporting a workers right unionize and strengthening unions is of the utmost importance. To do this, I support guaranteeing the right to unionize for all workers; strengthening organizing, collective bargaining, and the right to strike; protection of workers pensions; giving federal workers the right to strike; and much more.

In my time as Mayor, I have been endorsed by many union organizations and have proudly stood with union workers on the picket line. From the nurses union fight for safe staffing levels, to Stop and Shop workers fighting to keep their benefits, the labor movement remains strong in Massachusetts, and I will proactively support and expansion of unionization around the country by protecting a workers right to organize and striking down the coercive powers of large corporations.

Do you support a \$15/hour minimum wage?

I support a greater than \$15 minimum wage. The constant Republican (and often Democrat) talking point that an increase in minimum wage will harm small businesses and hurt communities has proven false time and again. That said, an expansion of the minimum wage to \$15 is not enough. Thus, I support the reinvigoration of our nation's antitrust laws to break up "too big to be regulated" companies that distort labor markets and suppress wages. I also support expanded worker co-ops, ownership structures, and unionization.

How do you plan to address the resurgence of white supremacy in the public discourse? Please tell us your plan to respond to white nationalist terrorist acts in this country?

White supremacy is the original sin of the United States, and a disease that has persisted throughout our history. With the election of Donald Trump, white supremacists have felt emboldened and moved into the public eye to preach hate and bigotry. Trump's election has caused a spike in the number of incidents of hate speech, hate crimes, and white nationalist terrorist acts. For the protection of all of our community, we have a duty to make combatting white nationalism a priority of our counter-terrorism strategy. As a congressman, I will advocate for this. I will speak out against white supremacy and condemn it in the strongest of terms. I will stand with, and do everything in my power, to protect communities who are targeted by white supremacist terrorism.

But combatting white supremacy entails much more than just responding to white nationalist terrorism. As Rep. Ocasio-Cortez said: "We wish it was as simple as denouncing a white hood, a burnt cross, vile language. But we need to address where supremacy *begins,* not just where it ends. Recognizing white supremacy in ourselves—our institutions, our subconscious, our own past remarks or acts (no matter how consciously unintentional), is what makes the healing work ahead challenging. It is incredibly important that we recognize that perfectly normal, good people are capable of aiding racism and white

supremacy. Recognizing that is not about pillorying people. It's about learning to recognize *the virus* and end an oppressive system designed to hurt us *all*". In Congress, I will work with leaders like Rep. Ocasio-Cortez to be a part of this healing process and to champion policies and initiatives - ranging from education, integration, healthcare, and so much more - that help our country to do the same.

<https://www.newsweek.com/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-white-supremacy-trump-el-paso-1453192>

What is your plan to reduce gun violence and mass shootings?

I was one of the first mayors in our country to join "Mayors Against Illegal Guns". I am fortunate that Massachusetts has some of the most strict gun laws in the nation - laws that must be expanded upon at the national level. I support enhanced background checks, limitations on the type of firearm, bullets, accessories, and magazine capacity. We are long overdue in allowing the CDC and other federal organizations to treat gun violence and mass shootings as a public health crisis and support continued research and best practices to end gun violence in America.

Do you support the payment of reparations and/or related structural adjustment to remunerate the descendants of enslaved African Americans to addressing America's history of codified and systemic racism?

Yes, I support the idea that reparations and structural adjustments should be made to remunerate the descendants of enslaved African Americans. Specifically, if elected to Congress, I would support legislation that would create a commission to study proposals for reparations and make recommendations on how they can be best implemented. I would also support legislation, such as the 10-20-30 Formula to Fight Persistent Poverty, sponsored by Rep. Clyburn, which would end structural inequalities that have disproportionately affected African Americans and other communities of color.

Do you support the return of unceded lands and territory or related royalties to Indigenous Populations as a form of redress for America's history of codified and systemic racism?

I am open to this as one of the tools that we should use to address America's long history of unsanctioned oppression, displacement, and murder of Indigenous Populations. What is clear to me is that the United States must ensure that we are centering, empowering, and protecting our Indigenous Communities. As outlined in the Green New Deal, this means obtaining prior and informed consent from Indigenous Communities for decisions that affect Indigenous Peoples and their territory; honoring the treaties that were made between the U.S. Government and Indigenous Peoples; and protecting the sovereignty and land rights of Indigenous Peoples. It also means ensuring that the U.S. Government is investing in, and adequately funding its programs focused on, Indigenous Communities - something that it is currently failing to do.

As a member of Congress, I am committed to centering, empowering, and protecting Indigenous Peoples. I will do this through the environmental and climate policy that I support, as well as in areas of healthcare, education, criminal justice, and more.

Do you support Medicare for All?

Yes. Specifically, I support the Medicare for All Act (H.R.1384) sponsored by Congresswoman Primilla Jayapal. Furthermore, I view Medicare for All as part of the strategy to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Not only does it ensure that every man, woman, and child who faces increased health risks as a result of climate change has access to healthcare, but it also works to support workers in the fossil fuel

industry and communities, disproportionately marginalized communities, who have been exposed to high levels of toxic and carcinogenic emissions as a result of our current fossil-fuel dependent system.

Do you support a woman's right to choose?

Yes

Race:

White

Gender:

Male

If you'd like, tell us more about your identity in your own words:

I identify as gay and am a member of the queer community.