

350 Action 2019 Candidate Questionnaire

Cristina TzinTzun Ramirez

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About You

Your Name: Cristina Tzintzun Ramirez

What office are you running for, and as which party?: Democratic Candidate for United States Senate of Texas

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.

In Texas, we have seen Houston underwater and agricultural communities that are suffering under unprecedented heat and drought. As the second-largest economy in the country with massive wind and solar potential, Cristina will make sure Texas is a leader in our nation's transition into a green energy future because no state has more to lose or gain than Texas. Like 81% of Democrats, Cristina supports the Green New Deal.

The Green New Deal lays the framework to make sure that our nation rises to the ambition necessary to tackle climate change, that oil and gas workers won't be left behind, that we will create millions of good new green jobs, and that we will support oil and gas companies as we transition off of fossil fuels and grow in renewable green energy.

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

Climate change disproportionately impacts communities of color and low-income communities. My climate policies for both adaptation and emissions reductions will focus on increasing equity and justice. For instance, I will work hard as Texas' Senator to ensure that federal funds flow equitably to communities of color. I will also advocate for policies that put an equity screen on all federal projects and funding. For instance, when federal permits for infrastructure are considered, applicants would need to show how they are addressing inequities in order to get the permit.

For climate mitigation, we will emphasize equity in workforce development programs, ensuring that communities of color have opportunities in the new green careers created as we tackle the climate crisis. I'll work to expand the tax credit for EVs to an incentive for those too poor to be able to take advantage of the tax credit. I have highlighted multiple times my support for the Green New Deal, which is focused on finding climate solutions that are equitable. Without racial, economic, and social justice there is no climate justice.

In short, I will put communities of color, just recovery, and worker protections at the center of all of my climate policies.

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?

The rise of greenhouse gases in Texas is alarming. We have increased emissions by nearly 20% in the past decade largely because of industrial and oil and gas emissions while the power sector has stabilized. We need to stop the increase and get on a path to reduction as quickly as possible.

Not all tactics are created equal. We need to focus on policies that rise to the scale of the challenge we face which is enormous AND have a chance of survival in the courts.

I would focus on eliminating flaring and venting which are the largest sources of methane, an extremely potent greenhouse gas, and continuing to eliminate coal in favor of renewable energy. I would also work to implement policies that reduce industrial emissions, a growing source of emissions that flow from the increase in oil and gas drilling.

I would pursue legislation that strengthens the ability of citizens to challenge permits and local governments to enforce environmental regulations.

I support a ban on fracking on federal lands. These lands are our gift to future generations and should be protected.

On private lands, according to fracking ban advocate and legal expert Kassie Siegel of the Climate Law Institute said:

Banning fracking on nonfederal lands is legally a bit more complicated because Congress exempted fracking from the federal Safe Drinking Water Act in 2005. But there are many other environmental laws, like the Clean Air Act, under which the EPA can set strict limits on air pollutants like methane and volatile organic compounds. Strict limits would require operators to shift to cleaner production methods or to greatly reduce air pollution from fracking.

Further, if Congress passed a ban on fracking (highly unlikely even with a Democratic majority in the Senate and House), the Supreme Court would likely strike it down. I'd rather focus my efforts and those of activists to clearly defined and accepted areas of current law like the Clean Air Act. It is highly likely that most of the Permian Basin area is out of attainment for sulfur dioxide, for example, but the federal and state environmental protection agencies (EPA and TCEQ) aren't enforcing current law. We should aggressively enforce current laws to protect human health and lower greenhouse gas emissions.

The sad reality is that we have strong regulations on the books federally and in Texas that are not enforced. When they are enforced, the penalties are often insufficient and offer no incentives for companies to change their behavior. Oil and gas companies have grown rich exploiting this system at a cost to the climate and public health of Texans. If elected, I will work to ensure that these laws are enforced and companies are held accountable for their pollution. I believe changing the system so it puts people ahead of corporate profits will have a profound impact on reducing emissions.

Do you support the 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. Evidence demonstrates many fossil fuel companies lied to the American people and like anyone who lies and causes harm, they should be held accountable. These same companies continue to operate with known violations so I also support investigating their health and safety records in the communities where they operate to see what they knew about those risks too.

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?

As Democrats, we have the opportunity to not just say what we're against– none of us are for putting children in cages– but also to say what we're for. Cristina supports extending citizenship to DREAMers, who are Americans in every way except on paper. But she also believes that in addition to the DREAMers, we need to legalize the status of the millions of hardworking and honest immigrants that have been part of our communities for years. We need an immigration system that allows future generations to come here safely and legally, that fills our labor needs, and that empowers all immigrants to live their full humanity as families and human beings.

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

I personally visited with the families seeking asylum living in camps in Matamoros. I spoke with families that have spent the last five months living in tents with no electricity, no running water, and barely any food. I will fight this administration for their human rights violations on the border and make it a priority to bring their stories to the forefront to end the Remain in Mexico Policy.

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?

Yes, climate change absolutely exacerbates mass migrations as storms, floods, heat waves, droughts, and other natural disasters are worsened by global warming. We have already seen a mass migration due to climate change as thousands of residents of New Orleans, many poor and from communities of color were uprooted because of Hurricane Katrina. Through my support for the Green New Deal and other climate policies that embrace equity, I will work to ensure that those communities are the most protected, not the most vulnerable.

What are your plans for criminal justice reform?

Cristina recognizes that our current criminal legal system unfairly targets the low-income, and black and brown communities, not only because of misguided policies like the Drug War but also because of corporations that profit off of imprisonment.

As Senator, Cristina would support the legalization of marijuana, as well as efforts to address the long-term harm done in communities of color such as expunging records of those with low-level marijuana offenses. She would also advocate for abolishing private prisons and mandatory minimums, ensuring that our government invests in schools rather than prisons. Lastly, she would support the federal abolition of the death penalty.

Do you support a worker's right to unionize?

America has and will create great jobs for the majority of Americans again. It starts with working to make every job a good job— one that pays a living wage, provides benefits/time off, and gives workers retirement security. The American people work hard and they should be compensated for it. Cristina supports expanding the rights of American workers to unionize to ensure they can negotiate fair wages and conditions with their employers. Cristina worked in the labor movement and for SEIU and UAW to expand the number of workers unionized in Texas and the country.

We must fully fund the Department of Labor Wage and Hour, OSHA and the EEOC to ensure American workers' rights are protected.

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

In Texas, our minimum wage is just \$7.25 an hour. We need to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour and ensure that it is tied to inflation. Wages should be based on the needs of American families, not on the inconsistency of political will in Washington. We should start measuring our economy not only by how big corporations are doing but by how well ordinary Texans are doing.

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?

Cristina recognizes that we need to address the growing threat of violence driven by white supremacy in our communities. These are the tragedies of the Politics of Hate. Especially in the wake of the massacre in El Paso, this issue hits close to home for many Texans. No Texan— and no American— should ever fear violence because of the color of their skin, the God they pray to, or any other identity they carry. As Senator, Cristina would direct funding to the Department of Justice to investigate hate crimes and treat acts of violence fueled by white supremacy as acts of domestic terrorism.

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

Every 3 hours, we lose a Texan to gun violence. After the incidents in Midland and Odessa, El Paso, and Santa Fe High School, Texans are demanding action. Students shouldn't have to live with the fear of being murdered in their schools. Instead of teaching kids how to survive a school shooting, we need to stop school shootings from happening. We need gun reform now.

John Cornyn has refused to act, putting the interests of the NRA over his Texas constituents, consistently earning an A rating from the gun lobby. Cristina believes that our representatives should fight for the young people, victims of gun violence and their families, and Texans that are demanding change, and not the NRA.

This is why Cristina has endorsed the Peace Plan for a Safer America by students and survivors of March for Our Lives. As Senator, Cristina will advocate for gun legislation that the majority of Americans support, including universal background checks, banning and buying back assault weapons like AR-15s and AK-47s, and holding the gun lobby accountable for the harm they have done to our communities.

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?

I support reparations to address the systemic racism of the descendants of enslaved African Americans in our country.

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?

Yes.

Do you support Medicare for All?

As Senator, Cristina would support Medicare for All because it is the most efficient and cost-effective way to make sure every American has quality healthcare, and it will allow small businesses and entrepreneurs to accelerate their growth instead of trying to worry about how to cover the cost of healthcare for themselves and their employees.

Medicare for All is one of the most popular policies in the country. Americans know that the current system we have is broken. By letting private insurance companies profit off our pain, illness, and injuries, we have created the most expensive healthcare system with some of the worst healthcare outcomes in the world. By any measure, our current system has failed us. Cristina will build a healthcare system that works for people, not for profit.

Do you support a woman's right to choose?

Yes

Race:

Latina

Gender:

Female

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

My mom's the oldest of nine kids from a farm-working family in Southern Mexico, and my dad's an entrepreneur from Ohio. They raised me to be a proud Irish Mexican American and I grew up being a part of two very different worlds. That experience taught me that at the end of the day, even if we look different, speak different languages, or come from different communities, we all want the same things – for our families to be safe, healthy, and treated with respect.