

350 Action 2019 Candidate Questionnaire

Mike Siegel

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About You

Your Name: Mike Siegel (TX-10)

What office are you running for, and as which party?: *Democrat running for Congress, TX-10*

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. Here is some of what I've written, as well as our campaign video and a public forum we held on the Green New Deal: <https://siegelfortexas.org/green-new-deal/>

The Green New Deal is a massive federal response to the twin threats of climate change and economic equality. The original New Deal responded to the Great Depression and the rise of fascism abroad by putting millions of Americans to work building infrastructure, creating art and planting trees, rebuilding the middle class and creating a comprehensive safety net. The Green New Deal requires a similar grand scope: to stop fossil fuel pollution and remedy the legacy of environmental injustice while creating millions of new jobs and establishing the framework for a sustainable future.

The Green New Deal is intersectional, with many component parts, but I see the framework as an extremely flexible approach to many of the problems in our 21st-century economic system. It can address housing and healthcare, job creation and working conditions; through GND programs we can increase union representation, combat discrimination in the workplace, and facilitate economic development in neglected communities. We can build a massive movement that unites labor and environmental organizations, youth groups and indigenous communities, white progressives and people of color. The Green New Deal is not only a legislative agenda but the structure of a movement for social justice and equality.

The Green New Deal must support the timeline set out by international experts, to quickly cut fossil fuel emissions in half and to aggressively eradicate all extraction and consumption of fossil fuels. I support the 350 demands to reject all new fossil fuel project permits; phase out drilling and fracking on public lands and waters; rejoin the Paris Climate Accord, and begin congressional investigations to determine whether the fossil fuel industry defrauded the American people by obscuring climate evidence and preventing meaningful reform. The Green New Deal must also reach beyond the energy sector to create a comprehensive program to address climate change in every sector, from construction and housing to transportation, infrastructure and more.

The "just transition" is essential to any Green New Deal, and I am committed to building alliances with organized labor to get union support for the GND. Our commitments to affected workers must be just as specific and concrete as our demands to curb fossil fuel emissions. I've spoken with electrical workers who expressed the concern -- "you are promising to close the factory I work at, but you can't tell me how I'll take care of my family." We need to bridge that communication gap and build a strong transition.

I support specific pay and benefits guarantees to displaced workers who must transition from fossil fuel industry work to comparably-compensated work, or who in some cases may take early retirement. I also support housing assistance and job training and continuing education for affected workers. At the same time, we should design GND programs to maximize the number of new employment opportunities across sectors--i.e., electrical jobs for coal plant workers, infrastructure jobs for laborers--so we can avoid whenever possible interruption in a worker's career.

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

Our demand for a Green New Deal begins with a recognition that, although the original New Deal played a key role in rebuilding the U.S. economy, putting millions of Americans to work developing essential infrastructure, and establishing a strong middle class that was able to defeat fascism abroad and sustain decades of domestic economic growth, there were also significant deficits to the program, including institutional bias against African-American and Latino workers as well as a failure to remedy the legacy of environmental discrimination towards Native American communities. The Green New Deal must be intersectional and must remedy the legacy of environmental injustice.

I am committed to remedying injustice through each program we put forward. As we phase out coal plants and chemical facilities located in frontline communities, we must prioritize the local communities as we develop jobs to mitigate environmental pollution and create new sustainable industries. As we develop a Green New Deal for housing, we must prioritize the construction of new public housing and renovation of existing public housing, and we must give folks who live in public housing the opportunity to perform the jobs in their communities. As we develop health programs, transportation programs, clean water programs, and environmental cleanup programs, at each stage we must ensure that people of color and low-income families are represented in the design and implementation of each initiative.

We are in a climate crisis, but we are also in a crisis of massive inequality, and in many instances, it is people of color who suffer most under the current fossil fuel paradigm. The Green New Deal offers a pathway to address inequality of wealth and opportunity, while also confronting the threat of climate change head-on.

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.

I will sponsor and co-sponsor legislation in support of these demands and link them with local struggles as a way to build political power. For example, across the Texas 10th Congressional District, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) is issuing new fracking permits, threatening an already-polluted community with additional contamination. We have a coal plant in Fayette County, in

the middle of TX-10, that is publicly owned and operated, and has been poisoning a massive aquifer for 40 years, as coal ash contamination and acid rain leach into the groundwater. In places like Brenham, in Washington County, a very Republican area, the TCEQ allowed fracking under Lake Somerville, the sole freshwater source for the county, despite massive local opposition. The coal ash contamination and the fracking contamination are merging in some of these areas, compounding the suffering of the people. I am organizing in these communities and will continue to do so as a representative, to bring these local struggles to the national stage, and to build a national movement to keep fossil fuels in the ground.

We also must link the fight against climate change to the fight to protect our democracy and keep corporate money out of politics. In Texas, the Governor can receive unlimited corporate contributions, and then has sole authority to appoint the commissioners to the TCEQ. In this way, local concerns over clean air and clean water are overridden by the corrupting influence of corporate money. We need to elevate these concerns, to break through the traditional partisan voting patterns and let folks know how their desire to drink clean water from a well is impacted by the local, state and national officials they elect.

One specific thing I intend to accomplish: to use my Congressional office to hold a hearing on the human and environmental impact of the Fayette Coal Plant. This facility was built 40 years ago with the promise of providing "clean coal" but has instead led to cancer and early-onset Alzheimer's, asthma and blood poisoning while killing wildlife and livestock and ruining agricultural operations. Because of the regulatory capture of the state government, and the lack of effective oversight, most people are wholly unaware of the actual impact of this facility on community health. We can use Congressional offices to shine a light on facilities such as this one and build increasing support for a complete and immediate transition away from coal and other fossil fuels.

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.

I support Congressional fact-finding as well as legislation to empower US attorneys and special prosecutors to prosecute fraud and other misconduct by fossil fuel concerns. Many forget that corporate entities are a public trust, with specific duties imposed by law, and there are multiple avenues by which the federal government can impose accountability for corporate malfeasance. Just as Enron deserved to be held accountable for its fraud on investors and Americans through its corrupt energy market manipulations, we must explore and take action when fossil fuel corporations put profit-seeking above truth, justice, health, and environmental sustainability.

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.

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

The United States must respect federal and international law, recognizing the rights of refugees and the right to seek asylum. We must dismantle the useless Border Wall, stop the criminalization of migration, and fully fund the infrastructure of our civil immigration system so that we can promptly review the claims of migrants to the United States. At the same time, we must pursue a foreign policy that prioritizes diplomacy and investments in civil society, so that at the same time we are improving our own ability to process new arrivals in a fair and humane fashion, we are also developing the conditions in these folks' home countries so that people do not have to flee their homes to seek safety and opportunity here.

I believe that families belong together. From this simple, moral premise, we can structure an immigration system that allows U.S. citizens to unite with their immediate and extended families. Mothers and fathers belong with their children; grandparents should be united with their families, too. By establishing a legal and humane approach to migration, we can work to re-establish the United States' standing with the international community.

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?

Climate change is exacerbating the migration crisis, further showing how we must address climate change in an intersectional, comprehensive manner. In the Northern Triangle in Central America, in the Sahel region of West Africa, around the world, we see how climate change, drought, and crop failure can cause regional instability and lead to mass migration. Similarly, flood, fire, and other environmental disasters have forced communities to uproot themselves and migrate in search of safety and security elsewhere.

As a congressional representative, I will support international diplomacy, respect for human rights, and investments in foreign aid as tactics to address the refugee crisis. Climate change does not stop at the border, and the question of refugees is for the international community to solve through diplomatic, collaborative processes. We must restore the standing of the United States in the international community as a starting point to address the refugee and climate crises.

What are your plans for criminal justice reform?

As a civil rights lawyer and a former school teacher, I see the United States' criminal justice system as a reflection of our democracy. The Bill of Rights lays out great aspirations: due process, the right to legal counsel, a ban on cruel and unusual punishment, the guarantee of equal protection under the law. But in practice, the system has achieved mixed results, with justice for some and oppression for others.

Here in Texas, our work is to undo the legacy of Jim Crow injustice. We have an extremely inequitable system of policing, prosecution, and incarceration, a system that is biased against poor people and people of color. The vast majority of prisoners have not been convicted of a crime – they are in jail because they cannot afford bail. We continue to arrest, prosecute and jail non-violent drug offenders, but most Texans and Americans support drug legalization. And while the jails are full of people who have committed property crimes and other non-violent offenses, we rarely if ever prosecute corporate criminals, including those who steal from working Texans and pollute our air and water.

As the next Congressperson in TX-10, I will fight for a criminal justice reform agenda, including the work to:

- * End cash bail
- * Abolish the death penalty
- * Ban private prisons
- * Increase funding for public defenders
- * Reduce mandatory minimum sentences and restore voting rights
- * End pretrial civil asset forfeiture
- * Combat the "School to Prison Pipeline"
- * Hold police accountable
- * End the "War on Drugs"
- * Ban mass surveillance
- * Prosecute corporate criminals

Do you support a worker's right to unionize?

Yes.

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

Yes.

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?

Through our discourse and policies, we must rebuild the movement to end white supremacist movements in this country. The foundation of our civil rights law in the U.S. is the Ku Klux Klan of 1871, which became Section 1983 of the U.S. Code and the basis of most civil rights lawsuits in federal court. Through our federal policies, including the allocation of resources at the Department of Justice as well as grant programs for state and local police, we must prioritize the dismantling of white supremacist and white hate groups that are responsible for so many of our mass shootings and domestic terrorism in the United States. I support reinstating DOJ programs that prioritized the destruction of white terror groups and expanding the authority of federal prosecutors to dismantle these groups. We must also call out white supremacist language in every instance, and ensure our public discourse is safe for every member of our community.

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

We need to take action on multiple fronts, including the enactment of common-sense gun regulations and getting NRA money out of politics. I support widely popular efforts to require comprehensive background checks, enact "red flag" laws, close gun show loopholes, and ban the sale of assault rifles. We also need to address the fact that the gun manufacturing industry is able to buy elected officials by funneling tens of millions of dollars in secret contributions to the NRA. The corruption of our politics through corporate money means that officials are not accountable to their constituents, even when public safety is at stake. We need to stop the NRA from buying our officials, which will enable us to put the public interest before gun manufacturer profits.

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.

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?

Yes.

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: