



SSIC_{SIM}

2019

BACKGROUND GUIDE
FRONTRUNNER 2020



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A LETTER FROM YOUR DIRECTOR

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to SSICsim 2019! I know I speak for the entire dais when I say how excited we are to meet you all in November. Before we bombard you with information, a little bit about myself: my name is Victoria Vale, and I will be your Director for FrontRunner 2020 at SSICsim. I am currently a third-year at the University of Toronto double-majoring in International Relations and Political Science and minoring in History.

The dais and I have worked very hard to design a unique and informative committee experience. In FrontRunner 2020, you and your fellow delegates will be working together to elect a new Democratic candidate for the American Presidency, develop a campaign platform which reconciles the needs of your district, your peers, and the American people, and run your candidate's campaign against the rest of the presidential field. This committee will require the knowledge you gain through research, creativity, quick-thinking, and cooperation with your fellow Congresspeople. I have included a more extensive explanation of how the committee will function on the following page.

It is important to recognize that this background guide does *not* contain a complete description of the committee's scope. The dais has provided you with broad context for the structure and status of American government, but it is crucial that you supplement this information with your own research. It is up to you to learn more about the values of your individual Congressperson and their district, identify which issues and solutions they prioritize, and develop possible platform goals and campaign tactics from that research. We have included a Research Guide at the end of this background guide as a helpful starting point.

You will quickly realize that the American political spectrum is quite complicated. I am entirely confident that each of you is capable of tackling it, but if you have any questions, I am always available to you as a resource. Feel free to email me at any time before the conference about the characters, research, the committee, or SSICsim itself.



The FrontRunner 2020 staff and I are incredibly excited to meet you all in committee. Good luck with your research, do not hesitate to reach out at any time, and see you all in November!

Sincerely,

Victoria Vale

Director, *FrontRunner 2020*

victoria.vale@mail.utoronto.ca

COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

When you arrive in committee in November, we will be in the lead up to the 2020 United States presidential primaries and caucuses. A vast array of Democratic candidates continue to vie for the candidacy against incumbent Republican Donald Trump. Each Democrat has preached their individual plan for solving the income gap, gun violence, climate change, access to health care, and beyond. Incoming polls show that the American public is completely divided between the potential candidates and it is very unclear who will win the nomination at the Democratic National Convention in July 2020.

You, a Democratic Congressperson in the House of Representatives, are unimpressed with the field of candidates running. You doubt that these candidates will successfully prioritize the types of change that Americans most desperately need, and you are concerned with how divided the voters are between candidates. You are not alone in these opinions: a group of other Green New Deal signers from the House have expressed similar concerns and wishes for a fresh, new candidate to enter the race.

This committee will do just that. You and some of your fellow Democratic Congresspeople will gather in November to give the American people a candidate who will truly represent the needs of their families, their communities, and the country as a whole. With that goal in mind, your first task when you arrive in committee will be to elect a new Democratic candidate for the presidential race from amongst yourselves. You will then collaborate to design and run a campaign for your new candidate and combat any crises which come your way. These crises will include regular poll updates, countering slander



campaigns against your candidate, debating other Democratic candidates, responding to press questions, aiding in national emergencies, and more. It will be up to you to help your candidate win the Democratic nomination and give the American people the leader they need.

Some specifics about the committee: most importantly, **we will be eliminating the three qualifications to be President** that are listed in the “Who Can Be President?” section of this Background Guide. The candidate that this committee elects does not need to be at least 35 years old, be a natural-born American citizen, or have lived in the United States for 14 years. This is a hypothetical simulation; thus, we are removing those requirements to give all involved Congresspeople an equal opportunity to be the elected candidate.

As stated above, your first task when you enter committee will be to elect a new candidate from amongst yourselves. Delegates should come into committee having researched their fellow Congresspeople in the committee (as listed in the “Democratic Congresspeople in this Committee” section) and selected a few people for whom they would like to run a campaign. To be completely clear: **you will be collaboratively designing a campaign for one of your fellow Congresspeople in the committee, NOT for a current Democratic candidate.** For example, you could elect and run a campaign for Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez or Ted Lieu, but not for Bernie Sanders or Elizabeth Warren.

Delegates should select a candidate based on the real-life Congressperson themselves, not based on the student who will be representing them in this committee. Delegates could, for example, choose to elect Congressman Joe Neguse because they think his values and backstory would be very appealing to a wide variety of voters, but they should not elect him solely because the student in committee seems like they are a good public speaker. Remember that you will be spending the conference trying to design and run a convincing campaign for one of these Congresspeople, so be sure to select a candidate with good potential. As a disclaimer, do not be concerned if the Congressperson you are representing is not elected by the committee as the new candidate: **the delegate representing the new candidate will have NO advantage when it comes to awards, and all delegates will have equal opportunities to participate, launch new initiatives, and direct the campaign.** Remember that the candidate you will elect is not currently participating in the



race, meaning that you will be designing a convincing platform from scratch, together, with plenty of opportunities for collaborative input.

As one final note, in referencing the other Democratic candidates running for the Presidency, we will be using the list of candidates running as of August 31, 2019.

If you have any questions or concerns about this Committee Structure, please do not hesitate to email the Director (victoria.vale@mail.utoronto.ca) and she will happily clarify! **We strongly recommend that you read the “Advice for Research and Preparation” section to ensure that you know exactly what information you will need for this committee**, but reach out if you have any questions!

BACKGROUND: AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS

What is the President's Role in the U.S. Government?

The U.S. government is divided into three branches: Executive (the President and their Cabinet), Legislative (Congress), and Judiciary (the Supreme Court and all courts below it). The President of the United States represents the Executive Branch of government and acts as both the head of state and the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.¹ Article II of the U.S. Constitution outlines the President's responsibility to execute and enforce laws created in the Legislative Branch (Congress).² This largely entails appointing the heads of federal agencies which carry out the majority of “day-to-day enforcement and administration of federal laws.”³ The Cabinet's fifteen executive departments administer the majority of the American government's policies and are headed by the Secretaries of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Labor, State, Transportation, Treasury, Veterans Affairs,

¹ “The Executive Branch,” *The White House*, accessed 24 August 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/the-executive-branch/>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.



and the Attorney General.⁴ The President also appoints the heads of executive agencies such as the Central Intelligence Agency and Environmental Protection Agency, as well as the heads of more than 50 independent federal commissions.⁵

The President also has the power to either sign Congressional bills into law or veto them, though Congress may override a presidential veto with a two-thirds vote in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.⁶ The Executive Branch controls international diplomacy with other states, and thus the President holds the power to both negotiate with foreign leaders and sign treaties, contingent on two-thirds ratification by the Senate.⁷ The President has the power to issue executive orders to “direct executive officers or clarify and further existing laws,” which are subject to reversal by American courts.⁸ The President also holds unrestricted power to grant pardons and clemencies for federal crimes, unless the charge is impeachment.⁹

Who Can Be President of the United States?

The Constitution lists three qualifications for the Presidency. First, the President must be at least 35 years of age.¹⁰ Second, the President must be a natural-born American citizen.¹¹ Though there is no consensus concerning the definition of a “natural-born citizen,” it is most often interpreted as the President fulfilling the legal requirements to be entitled to U.S. citizenship at their moment of birth, either by being born on U.S. soil or in a territory under U.S. jurisdiction or by being born to U.S. citizen parents.¹² Finally, the President must have lived in the United States for at least 14 years.¹³ The latter two of these requirements

⁴ “The Cabinet,” *The White House*, accessed 24 August 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-trump-administration/the-cabinet/>.

⁵ “The Executive Branch.”

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Jack Maskell, “Qualifications for President and the ‘Natural Born’ Citizenship Eligibility Requirement,” *Congressional Research Service*, 14 November 2011, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R42097.pdf>.

¹³ *Ibid.*



were included in the Constitution as a means of protecting the United States from foreign influence.

What is Congress?

Article I of the Constitution establishes Congress as the Legislative Branch of the United States. Congress is a bicameral legislature, meaning it has two chambers: the House of Representatives and the Senate.¹⁴ The Constitution grants Congress the “sole authority to enact legislation and declare war, the right to confirm or reject many Presidential appointments, and substantial investigative powers.”¹⁵ Bills must be passed by a majority in both the House and the Senate to reach the president's desk.¹⁶ A presidential veto can be overridden if the bill is passed again by a two-thirds vote in both the House and the Senate.¹⁷

The House of Representatives has 435 elected members divided among the states proportionally based on their total populations.¹⁸ The presiding member of the chamber is the Speaker of the House, who is elected from among the members and is third in succession for the Presidency.¹⁹ Members of the House of Representatives must be at least 25 years of age, must have been a U.S. citizen for at least seven years, and must be a resident of the state they represent.²⁰ They are not, however, required to reside in the district they represent.²¹ Members of the House are elected every two years.²²

The Senate has 100 Senators divided evenly among the states for two representatives each.²³ The Vice President is the head of the Senate and may cast a tiebreaker vote.²⁴ Senators must be at least 30 years of age, must have been a U.S. citizen for at least nine years, and must be a resident of the state

¹⁴ “The Legislative Branch,” *The White House*, accessed 24 August 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/the-legislative-branch/>.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*



they represent.²⁵ Senators are elected every six years and their terms are staggered so that approximately one-third of the Senate is up for reelection every two years.²⁶

How are Presidents Elected?

Presidential elections in the United States occur every four years.²⁷ The electoral process begins with primary elections and caucuses, depending on the state.²⁸ Both are used to select a presidential nominee within a party.²⁹ Primaries typically entail casting secret ballots to demonstrate support for a candidate, whereas caucuses are series of local public gatherings to decide which candidate to support.³⁰ Political parties then hold nominating conventions where the delegates vote on a nominee to unite behind.³¹ If one nominee wins the majority of votes in the primaries and caucuses then their nomination is usually confirmed through the delegates' votes at the national convention.³² If no candidate wins a majority of votes during the primaries and caucuses, however, then the convention delegates vote to select the presidential nominee.³³

After the nominees are selected, a general election is held in November of the election year.³⁴ This is when the Electoral College becomes relevant. In the United States, the direct votes of the people (the "popular vote") do not choose the Presidency. Instead, a candidate must win the majority of electoral votes to become President.³⁵ Each state is given as many electors as they have representatives in Congress.³⁶ After individuals cast their ballots, their votes go toward a statewide tally.³⁷ In 48 states and Washington, D.C., the winner of the

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ "Presidential Election Process," USA Gov, last updated 23 August 2019, <https://www.usa.gov/election>.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.



popular majority in each state wins all the electoral votes in that state.³⁸ A candidate needs a majority of electors (at least 270) to win the presidential election.³⁹ It is possible to win the Presidency through the Electoral College without winning the popular vote of the country; it happened in 2016 with the election of Donald Trump, George W. Bush in 2000, and three times in the 1800s.⁴⁰

This is a broad timeline of a typical presidential election cycle (provided by USAGov) applied to the upcoming election:

- Spring 2019 — **Candidates announce their intentions to run.**
- Summer 2019 - Spring 2020 — **Primary and caucus debates take place.**
- January - June 2020 — **States and parties hold primaries and caucuses.**
- July - early September 2020 — **Parties hold nominating conventions to choose their candidates.**
- Early November 2020 — **Election Day.**
- December 2020 — **Electors cast their votes in the Electoral College.**
- Early January 2021 — **Congress formally counts the electoral votes.**
- January 20 — **Inauguration Day.**⁴¹

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.



THE CURRENT STATE OF AMERICAN POLITICS

Polarization

The U.S.'s two-party system has always resulted in some level of polarity among the population, and the majority of studies show that American political polarization has increased significantly over time. Over recent decades and especially within the current administration, however, American politics have become hyper-polarized, with the rift between Democrats and Republicans decisively dividing the country. Though there is no consensus as to why American society has become so politically divided, the following are some often-cited factors:

At the forefront of polarization discussions is the idea of identity politics. Over the years, the foundational conceptual frameworks of both the Republican and Democratic parties have shifted from shared values to group identification.⁴² In the mid-20th century, American politics were largely defined by economic issues, with the Left focusing on worker's rights, trade unions, social welfare programs, and the redistribution of wealth, and the Right working to reducing the size of government and bolster private sector growth.⁴³ These concerns were paired with general bipartisan agreement regarding basic social norms, rights, and freedoms that are considered basic aspects of American ideology.⁴⁴ In the 1980s and 1990s, however, a movement against conservative "colour-blindness" and racial inequality began to take shape and emphasize group identity and identity consciousness.⁴⁵ As a result, politics today seems less defined by economic or ideological debates and more focused on questions of identity.⁴⁶ The Left now focuses less on "broad economic equality and more on promoting the interests of a wide variety of marginalized groups, such as ethnic minorities, immigrants and refugees, women, and LGBT people."⁴⁷ On the other

⁴² "How America's Identity Politics Went from Inclusion to Division," *The Guardian*, 1 March 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/mar/01/how-americas-identity-politics-went-from-inclusion-to-division>.

⁴³ Francis Fukuyama, "Against Identity Politics," *The Andrea Mitchell Center for the Study of Democracy*, accessed 25 August 2019, <https://www.sas.upenn.edu/andrea-mitchell-center/francis-fukuyama-against-identity-politics>.

⁴⁴ "How America's Identity Politics Went from Inclusion to Division."

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Fukuyama, "Against Identity Politics."

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*



hand, the Right backs its dedication to the “patriotic protection of traditional national identity.”⁴⁸ In this sense, the Left is often united in their vehement opposition to perceived faults of their right-wing counterparts, and vice versa.

The idea of “sorting” both geographically and politically has also likely contributed to extreme polarization in the United States. Studies show that Americans are living in increasingly politically like-minded communities.⁴⁹ Living in bubbles of like-minded neighbours tends to make individuals more extreme in their beliefs, as they are never faced with counter-opinions or challenged.⁵⁰ Mixed company and heterogeneous communities tend to “restrain group excess” and moderate opinions by presenting new ideas and angles to consider, whereas homogenous communities and like-minded company tend to polarize societies and “march toward the extremes” of political opinions.⁵¹ Further, sorting has occurred between the two political parties themselves. Gone are the days of liberal Republicans and conservative Democrats; in today’s political era, the parties have aligned themselves philosophically so that almost all liberals align with the Democratic party and all conservatives are registered Republicans.⁵² This has created an even larger partisan gap between the two sides, such that “across the 10 measures that the Pew Research Center has tracked on the same surveys since 1994, the average partisan gap has increased from 15 percentage points to 36 points.”⁵³ This shows that the divide has more than doubled, demonstrating the severity of the philosophical divide in American society.

This idea of sorting and homogenous communities has also been reflected in modern media. In previous eras, media was consistently backed by fact-checking, credible media institutions, and professionalism. With the rise of the Internet and social media, however, anyone can publish anything with no restrictions or obligations to fact-check or be unbiased. It is a non-system with no leaders, rules, or regulations.⁵⁴ This, combined with new algorithms on social

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ David Blankenhorn, “The Top 14 Causes of Political Polarization,” *The American Interest*, 16 May 2018, <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2018/05/16/the-top-14-causes-of-political-polarization/>.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.



media which only show you content you are expected to like based on previous clicks, paired with human tendency to associate with people with similar beliefs and viewpoints, has created insulated media bubbles for individuals to consume. Individuals are not challenged in their homogenous communities nor are they challenged online, as the content they see and choose to consume most often aligns with their viewpoints. This continues to solidify and extremify existing beliefs and thus contributes to such severe levels of polarization.

The 2020 Election

The American people will elect the next president of the United States on November 3, 2020.⁵⁵ As of August 2019, 23 individuals are in the race, with 20 vying for the Democratic candidacy and three for the Republican spot.⁵⁶ Republican President Donald Trump is the incumbent candidate and is running for re-election and a second term. Approximately one-third of previous U.S. presidents have won two consecutive elections, with George H.W. Bush as the last incumbent to have lost his re-election campaign in 1992.⁵⁷ The first two of 12 Democratic primary presidential debates occurred in June and July of 2019.⁵⁸ The Democratic and Republican presidential nominees will be selected at their respective national conventions in 2020. The Democratic National Convention will be held July 13-16, 2020 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.⁵⁹ The Republican National Convention will occur August 24-27, 2020 in Charlotte, North Carolina.⁶⁰

The following is the list of Democrats running for the presidential nomination, as of August 2019:⁶¹

- **Michael Bennet** — U.S. Senator from Colorado
- **Joe Biden** — former Vice President of the United States under Barack Obama
- **Bill de Blasio** — Mayor of New York City
- **Cory Booker** — U.S. Senator from New Jersey

⁵⁵ "Presidential Candidates, 2020," *Ballotpedia*, accessed 24 August 2019, https://ballotpedia.org/Presidential_candidates,_2020.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*



- **Steve Bullock** — Governor of Montana
- **Pete Buttigieg** — Mayor of South Bend, Indiana
- **Julián Castro** — U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and San Antonio mayor
- **John Delaney** — U.S. Representative from Maryland
- **Tulsi Gabbard** — U.S. Representative from Hawaii
- **Kamala Harris** — U.S. Senator from California
- **Amy Klobuchar** — U.S. Senator from Minnesota
- **Wayne Messam** — Mayor of Miramar, Florida
- **Beto O'Rourke** — former U.S. Representative from Texas
- **Tim Ryan** — U.S. Representative from Ohio
- **Bernie Sanders** — U.S. Senator from Vermont
- **Joe Sestak** — former U.S. Representative from Pennsylvania and three-star U.S. Navy Admiral
- **Tom Steyer** — founder of Farallon Capital Management
- **Elizabeth Warren** — U.S. Senator from Massachusetts
- **Marianne Williamson** — author and lecturer from California
- **Andrew Yang** — entrepreneur and author from New York

The following is the list of Republicans running for the presidential nomination, as of August 2019:⁶²

- **Donald Trump** — current President of the United States
- **Bill Weld** — former Governor of Massachusetts
- **Joe Walsh** — former U.S. Representative from Illinois

THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Party Platform

The Democratic Party's website (www.democrats.org) highlights aspects of the Party's 2016 platform and proclaims Democratic stances on issues in America.⁶³ Some of the areas its platform targets include:

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ "The Issues," *Democratic National Committee*, 2019, <https://democrats.org/where-we-stand/the-issues/>.



- **Civil rights**, including but not limited to “protecting voting rights, freedom of religion, women’s right to make their own health care decisions, and equal federal rights for LGBT couples” as well as “criminal justice reform” and reducing and preventing gun violence;⁶⁴
- **Education**, specifically increasing access to higher education by restructuring financial aid, equal access to quality public K-12 education, and increasing college completion-rates;⁶⁵
- **Environment**, including “curbing the effects of climate change, protecting America’s natural resources, and ensuring the quality of our air, water, and land for current and future generations,” which includes investing in clean energy and protecting public lands;⁶⁶
- **Healthcare**, specifically “making quality, affordable health care available to all Americans”;⁶⁷
- **Immigration reform**, specifically eliminating President Trump’s anti-immigration initiatives and fixing the U.S. immigration system and improving border security by prioritizing enforcement which targets criminals, rather than innocent families;⁶⁸
- **Jobs and the economy**, including “spurring job creation, rebuilding our infrastructure, investing in clean-energy technologies and small businesses, and making sure corporations, the wealthy, and Wall Street pay their fair share” in taxes whilst implementing tax cuts for working families and strengthening consumer protections;⁶⁹
- **National security**, such as modernizing the military to adapt to 21st-century threats while still “eliminating outdated programs and unnecessary spending” and preventing domestic and global terrorism;⁷⁰

⁶⁴ “Civil Rights,” *Democratic National Committee*, 2019, <https://democrats.org/where-we-stand/the-issues/civil-rights/>.

⁶⁵ “Education,” *Democratic National Committee*, 2019, <https://democrats.org/where-we-stand/the-issues/education/>.

⁶⁶ “Environment,” *Democratic National Committee*, 2019, <https://democrats.org/where-we-stand/the-issues/environment/>.

⁶⁷ “Health Care,” *Democratic National Committee*, 2019, <https://democrats.org/where-we-stand/the-issues/health-care/>.

⁶⁸ “Immigration Reform,” *Democratic National Committee*, 2019, <https://democrats.org/where-we-stand/the-issues/immigration-reform/>.

⁶⁹ “Jobs and the Economy,” *Democratic National Committee*, 2019, <https://democrats.org/where-we-stand/the-issues/jobs-and-the-economy/>.

⁷⁰ “National Security,” *Democratic National Committee*, 2019, <https://democrats.org/where-we-stand/the-issues/national-security/>.



- **Preventing gun violence**, specifically expanding and strengthening background checks before purchasing a firearm is permitted, ensuring guns are not bought by “terrorists (whether they be domestic or foreign), domestic abusers, other violent criminals, or those who have shown signs of danger toward themselves or others,” and treating gun violence as a “deadly public health crisis”;⁷¹
- **Retirement security**, specifically protecting Social Security, strengthening Medicare, and helping Americans save for retirement by helping Americans obtain employer-supported retirement plans;⁷²
- **Science and technology**, such as investing in technologies and scientific jobs and “increasing support for more advanced research, labs, and classrooms,” especially that regarding clean-energy technologies”;⁷³
- **Voting rights**, specifically supporting the Civic Engagement and Voter Protection team to safeguard the right to vote by ensuring a “fair, accessible election” by spreading voter education and preventing voter purging, fraud, suppression, and interference by foreign actors.⁷⁴

The Democratic Spectrum

Though many of the aforementioned goals do represent the overarching values of the Democratic Party and its candidates, there is an ideological spectrum of Democrats within the party. This range extends from the more moderate Democrats, who are ideologically closer to the midpoint between Democrats and Republicans, to those further on the Left with comparatively more liberal views. Averages taken of the ideological scores of the current 2020 contenders show that the field is much more liberal that it has in previous years.⁷⁵ In one study of the candidates’ voting records, with 0 being the most liberal and 100 being moderate, the current candidates average a score of 48.⁷⁶ This is

⁷¹ “Preventing Gun Violence,” *Democratic National Committee*, 2019, <https://democrats.org/where-we-stand/the-issues/preventing-gun-violence/>.

⁷² “Retirement Security,” *Democratic National Committee*, 2019, <https://democrats.org/where-we-stand/the-issues/retirement-security/>.

⁷³ “Science and Technology,” *Democratic National Committee*, 2019, <https://democrats.org/where-we-stand/the-issues/science-and-technology/>.

⁷⁴ “Voting Rights,” *Democratic National Committee*, 2019, <https://democrats.org/where-we-stand/the-issues/vote/>.

⁷⁵ Harry Enten, “The 2020 Democratic Field is More Liberal than Past Years,” *CNN*, 13 February 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/12/politics/2020-democratic-field-more-liberal-than-past-years/index.html>.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*



significantly more liberal than Barack Obama's 66 or Hillary Clinton's 63.⁷⁷ Additionally, the candidates currently considered to have a greater chance of winning tend to fall on the liberal side of the 48 score, with Cory Booker at 46, Kamala Harris at 31, and Elizabeth Warren at 27.⁷⁸ Other analyses yield different results with similar conclusions: *Business Insider* asked American voters to rank the 2020 presidential candidates based on ideology.⁷⁹ The results showed that Bernie Sanders is regarded as the most liberal candidate by a significant margin, with Kamala Harris, Cory Booker, Julián Castro, and Elizabeth Warren in the next group.⁸⁰ Joe Biden fell right in the middle of the candidates, and Seth Moulton, Eric Swalwell, John Delaney, Tim Ryan, and Michael Bennet are considered the least liberal.⁸¹ All of these findings demonstrate that there are significant distinctions and divisions within the Democratic Party which will influence the 2020 election.

There is another important factor to consider when comparing the Democratic candidates: in this upcoming election, many registered Democratic Americans do not plan to vote based on how candidates' specific ideologies will impact their daily lives. Rather, many Americans intend to give their vote to the candidate with the best chance of ousting Donald Trump. Now more than ever, Americans are strategically considering which candidate in their party has the best chance of winning based on the projected values of their peers. Relevant factors include which candidate has the most appeal to any on-the-fence voters, especially Republicans, who are also tired of Trump's antics, and which candidate has the most potential to sway original Trump supporters who are dissatisfied with Trump's policies.

The Green New Deal

All the Congresspeople participating in this committee are signers of the Green New Deal. The Green New Deal is a congressional resolution that was

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Eliza Relman and Walt Hickey, "Here's How Americans Rank the 2020 Presidential Candidates on the Political Spectrum," *Business Insider*, 19 May 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/2020-democratic-presidential-candidates-political-spectrum-ranking-2019-5>.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.



introduced to Congress on February 7, 2019.⁸² The resolution is not a bill or legislation, rather it is intended to act as a first step for effectively solving climate change.⁸³ The Green New Deal calls for the United States to, as climate scientists urge, completely halt all use of fossil fuels and restructure American infrastructure and industry with clean-energy technology, jobs, and investments.⁸⁴ In this sense, the Green New Deal is intended not only to transform the energy sector, but to restructure the American economy in its entirety.⁸⁵ The Green New Deal recognizes that this transformation will necessitate job loss for those in environmentally harmful industries, thus it also seeks to fairly redistribute public services and opportunities in America. It intends to combat wealth and power disparities which are often exacerbated by resources and industry by offering high-quality public health care, access to higher education and training, job guarantees, and more.⁸⁶ These measures are meant to protect Americans and re-equalize society by rebuilding the American economy “in a way that allows opportunity to flow more fairly.”⁸⁷ In summary, the Green New Deal is essentially a list of goals to prevent complete global destruction by climate change and a list of ways to achieve those goals while protecting and benefiting ordinary Americans.

The Green New Deal, however, faces strong opposition by the Republican Party and uncertain support by some parts of the Democratic Party. The resolution failed in a largely symbolic vote in the Senate in March 2019, but Green New Deal Democrats will continue to introduce smaller proposals with more specific policies and solutions to continue the mission of the original resolution.⁸⁸

The document is only 14 pages and is accessible with this link:
<https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/hres109/BILLS-116hres109ih.pdf>. A short video

⁸² David Roberts, “The Green New Deal, Explained,” Vox, 30 March 2019, <https://www.vox.com/energy-and-environment/2018/12/21/18144138/green-new-deal-alexandria-ocasio-cortez>.

⁸³ Vox, “The Green New Deal, Explained,” YouTube video, 7:29, posted 12 June 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxIDJWCbk6I>.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Roberts, “The Green New Deal, Explained.”

⁸⁶ Vox, “The Green New Deal, Explained.”

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Roberts, “The Green New Deal, Explained.”



which clearly explains the point of the Green New Deal can be found here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxIDJWCbk6I>.

DEMOCRATIC CONGRESSPEOPLE IN THIS COMMITTEE (DELEGATES)

Below is the projected list of Congresspeople who will participate in this committee. These Congresspeople were selected from the list of Democrats who signed the Green New Deal. They are arranged alphabetically by the state they represent, and there will be no more than one representative per state in the committee. At the time of writing this Background Guide we cannot determine the exact number of delegates who will participate in this committee, so it is possible that not every role will be filled at the conference, thus delegates are encouraged to select more than one Congressperson who they would like to support in a vote for candidacy.

- **Ted Lieu** — Representative for California's 33rd congressional district
- **Joe Neguse** — Representative for Colorado's 2nd congressional district
- **Eleanor Holmes Norton** — Representative for Washington D.C.'s at-large congressional district
- **John Lewis** — Representative for Georgia's 5th congressional district
- **Danny K. Davis** — Representative for Illinois' 7th congressional district
- **Chellie Pingree** — Representative for Maine's 1st congressional district
- **Jamie Raskin** — Representative for Maryland's 8th congressional district
- **Ayanna Pressley** — Representative for Massachusetts's 7th congressional district
- **Rashida Tlaib** — Representative for Michigan's 13th congressional district
- **Ilhan Omar** — Representative for Minnesota's 5th congressional district
- **Chris Pappas** — Representative for New Hampshire's 1st congressional district
- **Deb Haaland** — Representative for New Mexico's 1st congressional district
- **Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez** — Representative for New York's 14th congressional district
- **Earl Blumenauer** — Representative for Oregon's 3rd congressional district
- **David Cicilline** — Representative for Rhode Island's 1st congressional district
- **Steve Cohen** — Representative for Tennessee's 9th congressional district



- **Peter Welch** — Representative for Vermont's at-large congressional district
- **Gerry Connolly** — Representative for Virginia's 11th congressional district
- **Pramila Jayapal** — Representative for Washington's 7th congressional district
- **Mark Pocan** — Representative for Wisconsin's 2nd congressional district

ADVICE FOR RESEARCH AND PREPARATION

Though this background guide gives a short overview of American government and the electoral process, it is crucial for delegates to conduct their own thorough research to garner a true understanding of the people and issues which will be discussed in this committee. This includes specifics about both the issues and debates you are tackling and the figures and districts you will represent and work alongside.

When you enter committee in November, you do not need to be an expert on the American electoral system or the government structure. It is most vital that you research and understand the key debates in American politics and the values, goals, and priorities of:

- The Congressperson you will represent;
- The congressional district your Congressperson represents;
- The fellow Congresspeople in the committee;
- Other Americans outside your party.

Of course, it is most important that you research who you are representing so you can represent them accurately. It is also vital to understand the wants of the congressional district you represent, as you will likely need to lobby those communities to support your candidate, and because they are the voters who will ultimately re-elect you when your term expires. It is important for you to know what your Congressman and your district's priorities are so you can make sure those values and policies are represented in the campaign to secure the support of voters in your district.

On that note, you are designing a campaign and a platform from scratch. The candidate you elect does not already have a platform, so you must all collaborate to create and market one. For that reason, it is very



important for you to understand some of the core divisive issues in America (health care, taxation, climate change, women's access to health care decisions, gun control, immigration, etc.—look to the “Party Platform” section for more). Don't worry, you don't need full extensive policy plans for every issue in America, but details strengthen campaigns, and in debates against other candidates it will be important to understand the issues and propose solutions to them. Collaborating with your fellow delegates will be very helpful in this process, as will researching both your individual Congressperson, their ideas, and their past bills in addition to other Democratic bills that your Congressperson may have signed or potentially supported.

For sources, government sources are ideal for questions about government structure or the electoral process. The Democratic Party site is good for an understanding of general unifying goals among Democrats. The Congress website is helpful for researching past bills for policy ideas. You can also use news sources, just be cautious: as discussed in the “Polarization” section, media in the United States can be quite polarized, so be wary of political bias in whatever you read. If you would like any help finding sources or have any confusion or questions surrounding American issues, debates, or policies, please do not hesitate to ask (victoria.vale@mail.utoronto.ca)!

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