

2020 Democratic Presidential Candidates Policy Analysis

Introduction:

The 2020 election cycle will provide immense electoral intrigue, as Republicans and Democrats vie for the presidency and majorities in the House and Senate. While the presidential primary has received disproportionate horse race coverage from the media, candidates have released numerous detailed policy proposals that outline their legislative ambitions. This analysis highlights these policy proposals and provides a comprehensive outline for the relevant policy areas including, transportation, Indian affairs, natural resources, economic development, labor, agriculture, housing, and taxes and trade.

According to [the Economist's national democratic presidential primary aggregator](#), the leading candidates include:

- Former Vice President Joe Biden (27%)
- Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders (20%)
- Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren (17%)
- Mayor of South Bend Indiana Pete Buttigieg (8%)
- Former NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg (7%)
- Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar (4%)
- Entrepreneur Andrew Yang (2%)

According to [538's national democratic presidential primary aggregator](#), the leading candidates include:

- Former Vice President Joe Biden (27.0%)
- Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders (20.6%)
- Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren (15.4%)
- Former NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg (7.5%)
- Mayor of South Bend Indiana Pete Buttigieg (7.3%)
- Entrepreneur Andrew Yang (4.0%)
- Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar (3.3%)

	Priorities and Campaign Dynamics	Transportation and Infrastructure	Indian Affairs	Natural Resources
Joe Biden	<p>Biden has built his campaign around the premise that President Trump is an aberration who must be stopped from “fundamentally altering the character of the nation.”</p> <p>He emphasizes bipartisanship and his ability to work across the aisle.</p> <p>Biden benefits from his association with former President Obama, who remains overwhelmingly popular with Democrats, and maintains a consistent lead in national primary polling.</p>	<p>Biden proposes a \$1.3 trillion infrastructure program over the next ten years, including \$50 billion for road and bridge repair, stabilizing the Highway Trust Fund, doubling BUILD and INFRA Grants to \$3.5 billion annually, and increasing USACE funding by \$2.5 billion. Additionally, Biden supports utilizing TIFIA and RRIF funds to facilitate a “rail revolution.”</p> <p>Biden has called for regulatory streamlining through an expedited permitting process while maintaining Davis-Bacon and related labor protections.</p> <p>He has called for financing the ambitious project by repealing the TCJA Act and raising taxes on wealthy individuals and corporations.</p>	<p>Biden has not released a plan for or meaningfully discussed Tribal Affairs policy.</p>	<p>Biden has called for ending new oil and gas leases on federal land, banning offshore drilling, developing new nuclear energy technologies, collaborating with state governments to deploy electric vehicle charging stations, and implementing a carbon tax.</p> <p>Biden supports transitioning to a clean energy economy by 2050, as well as empowering workers through \$1.7 trillion of public investment in clean energy works programs.</p> <p>Biden supports developing new nuclear energy technologies as a component of climate change mitigation.</p>
Bernie Sanders	<p>Sanders has built a campaign around the idea that working people have been left behind. He is an unabashed progressive who identifies as a Democratic-Socialist, and his unexpectedly successful primary challenge in 2016 has shifted the political center of gravity in the Democratic field considerably to the left.</p> <p>He has made clear that he will prioritize health care, with his signature Medicare-For-All plan driving healthcare to the forefront of the Democratic Primary.</p> <p>Like Warren, he suffers as a well-known, divisive political figure. However, his populist message that eschews hot button cultural debates in favor of 99 percent against the 1 percent framing could be successful against President Trump.</p>	<p>Sanders proposes spending approximately \$12 trillion as a part of the Green New Deal (GND) to transition to a 100% clean energy economy by 2030. This spending includes \$936 billion to develop road and bridge climate change resiliency, providing more than \$2 trillion in grants to encourage the adoption of electric engines, investing \$150 billion to decarbonize aviation and maritime shipping and transportation, providing \$407 billion to facilitate the adoption of electric school buses, and investing \$85.6 billion to develop electric vehicle charging infrastructure.</p> <p>He has called for investing \$300 billion to increase public transportation ridership and providing \$607 billion to develop a national high-speed rail network. Additionally, the 2015 Rebuild America Act, which his campaign frequently references, proposes increasing the Highway Trust Fund by \$75 billion and growing BUILD Grant funding to \$5 billion.</p> <p>Sanders calls for funding his initiatives through a combination of dramatic increases in taxes on the wealthy and corporations and slashing the military budget.</p>	<p>Sanders has called for honoring Native American tribal treaty rights and sovereignty. He also supports various economic development strategies at the national level, like the GND, to support economic development in Indian Country.</p> <p>Sanders supports reauthorizing and expanding the Violence Against Women Act to allow tribes to prosecute non-Native criminals.</p>	<p>Sanders supports the GND. The GND includes investing \$16.3 trillion into the clean energy transition and creating 20 million jobs.</p> <p>Sanders has called for banning offshore drilling. He also supports preserving public lands.</p>

<p>Elizabeth Warren</p>	<p>Warren has fashioned herself as the woman with the plans to radically restructure capitalism and alleviate inequality. She has stated that she will prioritize political reforms aimed at reducing corruption in the political system. Additionally, her background as a prominent academic and role in creating the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau indicates she will focus on financial sector regulations.</p> <p>While her campaign began slowly with a series of errors and scrutiny over electability, she has moved up in the polls and remains one of the front runners.</p> <p>While her left-wing political positions can be divisive, her message contains significant populist appeals that counterbalance such concerns.</p>	<p>Warren supports utilizing a thorough, independent-review process to assess potential infrastructure projects’ environmental impacts. She also supports investing in sustainable infrastructure, although she has not proposed a specific dollar figure.</p> <p>Warren has expressed interest in considering a federal gas tax increase but worries about its regressive structure.</p>	<p>Warren has called for the Honoring Promises to Native Nations Act, which would address issues in Indian Country. She also supports removing programs supporting Indian Country from the appropriations process and reclassifying them as entitlement spending.</p> <p>Warren proposes creating permanent cabinet-level positions in the White House including, a Council on Native American affairs, a budgetary office of Tribal Affairs, and Deputy Secretary for Tribal Nations in the Department of the Interior.</p> <p>She supports expanding federal funding for the Bureau of Indian Education and Indian Health Service.</p> <p>Warren has called for removing medals of honor from those involved with the Wounded Knee Massacre. Additionally, she has indicated that she supports a Carcieri and Oliphant fix.</p>	<p>Warren proposes a total moratorium on all new fossil fuel leases, including offshore drilling and activities on public lands. She will also set a goal of 10% of electricity generation from renewable sources offshore or on public lands.</p> <p>Warren supports making Land and Water Conservation Fund spending mandatory and funding land management agencies to eliminate the infrastructure and maintenance backlog on public lands.</p> <p>Warren proposes a federal fracking ban. She also supports reinstating the Obama-era clean water rule, which sought to better define which waters are considered under the purview of federal clean water regulations.</p>
<p>Pete Buttigieg</p>	<p>Buttigieg attained national prominence in 2017 when he ran for the DNC chair. His campaign has focused on the need to shake things up in Washington and highlighted his experience as a mayor and as a veteran of the War in Afghanistan.</p> <p>He supports a more moderate approach to significant issues compared to his more progressive rivals. However, he has supported a variety of progressive policies, including his signature healthcare policy: Medicare-For-All-Who-Want-It.</p> <p>While questions remain around his electability, as the first openly gay candidate, he has seen a steady rise in early state primary polling and remains a front runner in Iowa.</p>	<p>Buttigieg has called for spending more than \$1 trillion to support infrastructure through establishing a \$100 billion lead abatement fund, providing \$165 billion to ensure the Highway Trust Fund's solvency through 2029, creating 6 million well-paying jobs, and creating a \$200 billion transition fund to support the shift to a clean energy economy.</p> <p>Buttigieg supports establishing a science-based PFAS standard, investing \$30 billion in water and wastewater infrastructure, providing \$46 billion to support public school repairs and maintenance, creating a ‘Local Leaders Office’ within DOT to elevate the perspective of local leaders, and investing \$150 billion to support local governments to deliver equitable public transportation.</p> <p>Buttigieg has called for doubling the BUILD Grant program funding, prioritizing and increasing funding for road safety initiatives, facilitating state and MPOs to carry out projects of regional significance through a \$3 billion grant program and providing an additional \$2 billion through the TIFIA and RRIF programs, and doubling Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program funding.</p>	<p>Buttigieg has called for reinstating a Nation-to-Nation relationship between the US and Tribal governments, appointing a senior Native American Advisor, creating an office in OMB dedicated to Native affairs, authorizing Indian tribes to tax activities on their lands, creating a clean Carcieri fix, and amending the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act to clarify the Interior Secretary’s authority.</p> <p>He has called for updating the Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Act to provide additional sovereignty to tribes.</p> <p>Buttigieg supports fully funding the Bureau of Indian Education and Indian Health Service.</p>	<p>Buttigieg has called for transitioning to a clean energy economy by 2050 and quadrupling clean energy R&D funding.</p> <p>He also supports establishing three clean energy investments including, a \$250 billion American Clean Energy Bank, a \$250 billion Global Investment Initiative, and a \$50 billion American Cleantech Fund.</p> <p>The Global Investment Initiative seeks to counter the Chinese Belt and Road initiative in the developing world.</p>

	Economic Development	Labor	Agriculture	Housing	Taxes and Trade
Joe Biden	Biden supports investing \$20 billion in rural broadband infrastructure and increasing federal investments in the development and deployment of solar and wind energy technology.	Biden supports financially penalizing organizations that interfere with workers' organizing efforts, allowing workers to vote to form a union if a majority sign authorization cards, raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour, and preventing employer misclassifications.	Biden has called for antitrust enforcement to increase competition in the agriculture market. Biden supports subsidizing agricultural producers to encourage the adoption of clean energy technologies.	Biden has not released a plan for or meaningfully discussed housing policy. However, he has called for providing housing security for the formerly incarcerated as part of broader criminal justice reforms.	Biden supports joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and opposes using tariffs as a negotiating tactic. He advocates for a US trade agenda that promotes American agriculture exports. Biden has called for raising capital gains taxes and the corporate tax rate, though he supports holding the rate below pre-2017 levels. Biden supports the Senate passed USMCA.
Bernie Sanders	Sanders has called for a guaranteed jobs program, which employs in the infrastructure, childcare, elderly care industries.	Sanders supports providing unions with the ability to organize through a card check process, eliminating right-to-work laws, providing federal workers with the right to strike, requiring merged firms to honor existing union contracts, expanding and updating the persuader rule, raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour, and banning the permanent replacement of striking workers.	Sanders has called for aggressive antitrust action that includes breaking up large-scale agriculture conglomerates, establishing the Grain Inspectors, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA), and reforming seed patent law.	Sanders has called for investing \$1.48 trillion over ten years in the National Affordable Housing Trust Fund to address the national housing supply shortage. Sanders also supports increasing tenant protection rights, reducing exclusionary zoning, and instituting a national rent control program.	Sanders has called for an escalating wealth tax on fortunes that exceed \$32 million that tops out at 8% on wealth accrued beyond \$10 billion. Sanders supports dramatically raising the marginal tax rate on high-income earners. He also supports closing loopholes that lower taxable income for high earners. Sanders has called for facilitating domestic manufacturing, adding strict currency manipulation enforcement to trade agreements, and prioritizing workers' interests in trade deals. Sanders was one of a handful of Senators to vote against USMCA.
Elizabeth Warren	Warren supports a public option for broadband, which would increase rural broadband access. Warren has called for actively managing the dollar to facilitate domestic manufacturing, increasing export	Warren supports measures to improve working conditions by extending labor rights to all workers, strengthening organizing and collective bargaining, raising wages, protecting pensions, expanding worker protections, combating discrimination, raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour, and improving labor protection enforcement.	Warren has called for aggressive antitrust action that includes breaking up large-scale agriculture conglomerates. Warren proposes investing \$15 billion annually into a USDA conservation program that supports agriculture producers' transition to greener technology.	Warren proposes investing \$500 billion over the next ten years in affordable and public housing, along with utilizing fiscal incentives to encourage local governments to relax their zoning policy and increase housing supply. She supports expanding the Indian Housing Block Grant to \$2.5 billion.	Warren proposes an "ultra-millionaire tax," which imposes a 2% tax on fortunes greater than \$50 million and a 6% tax on every dollar of net worth above \$1 billion. Warren has called for trade negotiations to put the American worker first. She supports trade negotiations publicly disclosing negotiation drafts, scaling back Congressional fast-tracking, and requiring USITC to produce a regional analysis of potential trade agreements impacts. She has called for using tariffs to change other countries' trade practices.

	promotion, scaling up apprenticeship programs, and increasing federal R&D investment.				<p>Warren supports changing the way corporate taxes are collected to reduce avoidance. She has called for a 7% tax on every dollar of corporate profit beyond \$100 million.</p> <p>Warren proposes a tax on large-scale corporate lobbying and increasing lobbying disclosure requirements to increase transparency.</p> <p>Warren, in a reversal, voted to pass USMCA.</p>
Pete Buttigieg	Buttigieg has called for creating regional innovation clusters, creating a national network of apprenticeships, developing a community renewal program, and instituting the Douglass Plan to address the inequities impacting African Americans.	Buttigieg has called for raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour, ending right-to-work-laws, reducing union election interference, guaranteeing gig workers labor protections, punishing corporations that interfere with union elections, and ensuring the right to multi-employer bargaining.	<p>Buttigieg supports incentivizing farmers to adopt clean technology, including facilitating soil carbon sequestration.</p> <p>Buttigieg has called for additional antitrust enforcement in the agribusiness space.</p>	<p>Buttigieg supports ending homelessness for families with children, constructing affordable housing, and expanding tenant protections. He also supports creating a Community Homestead Act, which would create a public trust that purchases abandoned properties and revitalizes them to provide housing and economic development.</p> <p>Buttigieg has called for investing \$430 billion to create more than 2 million affordable housing units.</p>	<p>Buttigieg supports negotiating with China to change its industrial policies through trade policy but does not support Trump's trade war.</p> <p>He supports changing NAFTA to protect American workers and the environment.</p> <p>Buttigieg has called for raising the top individual tax rate to 49.9 percent.</p> <p>He has proposed funding domestic spending programs by repealing the TCJA Act.</p> <p>Buttigieg supports the Senate passed USMCA.</p>