

20 FOR 2020



The New Democrat Coalition (NDC) is focused on solving the challenges of the 21st century. The NDC looks at old problems through a new lens and advocates for forward-looking policies that expand opportunities, promote innovation, keep Americans safe, and reinvigorate government. The NDC's 20 for 2020 agenda outlines a path forward for Congress to enact durable change on some of our nation's most pressing issues to help ensure America leads the future. The time to act is now. Americans cannot afford to wait.



SPUR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Create more opportunity for more people in more places

Problem: A dozen years after the Great Recession, our economic recovery has been uneven. The top quintile of communities experienced a strong recovery, receiving over half of the new jobs and businesses created. On the other end of the spectrum, the least prosperous quintile of communities now has fewer jobs and businesses than at the end of the last century.

Solution: The federal government should work with public and private sector partners to create opportunity for more people in more places. Small measures are insufficient. Instead, we should revolutionize our approach to economic development by taking deliberate action to focus on the people and communities left behind by today's economy. The NDC believes Congress should:

- Prioritize federal economic development programs in communities most in need
- Expand access to capital and incentivize private investment in communities in need and in diverse entrepreneurs
- Connect workers and communities to opportunities in areas and industries experiencing growth
- Help Americans access educational opportunities at all stages of their career



CLOSE SKILLS & OPPORTUNITY GAPS

Close the skills and opportunity gaps and give workers the tools to succeed in the 21st century economy

Problem: The nature of work and the economy are changing. New industries and job functions are being created while the tasks performed and skills needed in existing ones are evolving across all industries and worker skill levels. As the skills needed across a broad spectrum of the labor market evolve, existing models of education do not always meet the needs of those entering the workforce or mid-career workers who need to upskill or change careers.

Solution: Congress must work to prepare those entering the workforce, upskill those who are midcareer, and relaunch those displaced by any disrupting force. The NDC believes Congress should:

- Give every American access to the tools and skills needed to succeed in the 21st century economy, including through expanded career and technical education (CTE), apprenticeships, and partnerships between educational institutions and the private-sector
- Remove obstacles for Americans to access middle-skill jobs and close the opportunity gap, including by standardizing credentials, reforming hiring practices, and valuing skills over educational attainment
- Create a culture of lifelong learning and make it easier for workers to invest in their futures, including by providing financial incentives and tools for upskilling, and modernizing our federal workforce development and worker displacement programs

More from the [NDC's Closing the Skills and Opportunities Gap.](#)



MODERNIZE THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

Create a 21st century social contract to catch all workers

Problem: Technological disruption, automation, and new forms of work are rapidly reshaping the nature and structure of work. As our economy evolves and alternative work arrangements increase, including independent contractor models, more workers are being left out of the social contract that was built for traditional employer-employee relationships. Alternative workers generally do not have access to traditional employer-based benefits, like health insurance or retirement savings, and often have unequal or no access to many social safety net programs and protections.

Solution: Congress must modernize the social contract to work in today's economy in which the nature and structure of work continues to evolve. The NDC believes Congress should:

- Support innovation of and experimentation with benefits systems by local governments and the private sector
- Develop benefits models that work for all workers, including portable benefits systems that are worker-centric
- Modernize the government-sponsored safety net and protections to catch all workers

More from the [NDC's Creating a 21st Century Social Contract.](#)



SPUR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Make it easier for Americans with a good idea to start a business

Problem: Despite the longest economic expansion in history, new business formation is at record lows. Fewer businesses being created means less economic dynamism, which dampens economic growth and reduces new opportunities for workers.

Solution: Startups and small businesses help spur the innovation and growth that drive the American economy, creating more opportunities for workers. More new businesses, innovations, and new ideas bring more choices and access to goods and services for consumers. The NDC believes Congress should:

- Reorient federal agencies to better support small and new businesses
- Expand access to capital for underserved communities, small businesses, and early-growth stage companies
- Encourage private investments in communities and entrepreneurs in regions outside of major economic hubs



ENACT COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

Recognize the significant contributions of immigrants to our communities and economy, and enact comprehensive immigration reform

Problem: Years of inaction and failure to reform our broken immigration system has been exacerbated by the backwards and harmful actions of President Trump and his administration. Today, our nation's values and economy are at risk while millions of undocumented immigrants live in fear, and millions of Dreamers face uncertainty. Instead of modernizing border security to address real threats, this administration has enacted a wasteful, reckless strategy that makes us less safe, and vilifies immigrants.

Solution: Congress should reverse the actions of the Trump administration and work together to advance comprehensive immigration reform that will secure the country's borders with smart and targeted technologies and practices, create a modern immigration system that reflects American values, creates a pathway to citizenship for immigrants with long-term ties and residency in the U.S., and supports U.S. businesses and farmers. The NDC believes Congress should:

- Reverse the harmful actions of the Trump administration by establishing fundamental humanitarian standards of care and access to information and support for individuals in Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) and Immigration and

and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody; increasing accountability; improving tools for Congressional oversight; stopping the thread of deportation for long-term residents like Dreamers, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders, and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) recipients; and continuing to welcome refugees in search of safety and opportunity

- Revamp the visa system to ensure the U.S. attracts and retains the world's brightest minds and hardest workers
- Work together to pass comprehensive immigration reform that upholds all of these values while addressing structural issues in our existing system, including building a pathway to citizenship for immigrants with long-term ties and residency in the U.S.

[More on those efforts.](#)



EXPAND AFFORDABLE HEALTH COVERAGE

Strengthen and improve our existing health care system to achieve affordable, universal insurance coverage

Problem: Millions of Americans received health insurance coverage under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), but partisan attacks have undermined the benefits and stability of the ACA, leaving health care out of reach or unaffordable for millions of Americans.

Solution: Congress must defend the health care coverage of millions of Americans against destabilizing efforts and embrace new policies that build on its foundation to reach affordable, universal coverage. The NDC believes Congress should:

- Reverse partisan actions of the Trump Administration that undermine the protections, affordability, and availability of health coverage and care
- Stabilize health insurance markets, and make insurance costs more affordable
- Build a pathway to universal coverage by building on the foundation of the ACA

[More on those efforts.](#)



REDUCE HEALTH CARE COSTS

Ensure patients get the care they need by reducing costs and complexities, increasing transparency, and modernizing our health care system

Problem: Even for Americans with health insurance, health care can still be complex, costly, or even inaccessible. This can often prevent many Americans from seeking regular preventative care and screenings that may keep them healthy or catch a problem early, leading to worse health outcomes and greater costs to the health care system and patients.

Furthermore, some communities do not have any, or adequate, access to health facilities and providers, making it even more difficult and costly to access care.

Solution: Congress should prioritize reducing costs and complexities, increase transparency, and modernize our health care system to meet the needs of the 21st century. Doing so will create better health outcomes, lower patient costs, and make the system more resilient and equitable. The NDC believes Congress should:

- Reduce costs and increase access to care by embracing innovation
- Give patients more tools to navigate the health care system by increasing transparency in pricing and coverage options to help ensure patients are not liable for unfair costs
- Expand availability of and access to affordable care and qualified health professionals in underserved and rural communities

More on those efforts.



LOWER PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Lower the costs of prescription drugs and foster innovation to find new cures

Problem: American families should not have to choose between putting food on the table and paying for medication. The prescription drug system can be complex and lack transparency, often limiting awareness and choice for patients, sometimes suppressing competition, and artificially inflating pricing. Unbalanced incentives and cost-sharing can also sometimes lead to increased and unaffordable out-of-pocket prescription costs for patients.

Solution: Congress should focus on durable solutions that lower drug prices, bring more options to the market, and create transparency. The NDC believes Congress should:

- Promote transparency in options, costs, and pricing of medications
- Promote innovation by making significant investments in research and development in new treatments and cures
- Spur and support competition in prescription drug markets
- Enact policies to lower prescription drug costs for patients

More on those efforts.



PROMOTE MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Invest in affordable housing and clear the pathway for more construction

Problem: Affordable housing is becoming increasingly scarce and expensive. Homebuyers and homebuilders are held back by limited access to financing, affordable building materials, and skilled labor, as well as land-use restrictions and NIMBYism. Outdated or disconnected planning and approval pipelines can also prevent the integration of housing and infrastructure development. This results in communities being disconnected from their needs, housing costs that have left millions of people struggling, and millions more who are left homeless.

Solution: Congress needs to address the root cause of the problem with market-based solutions that clear the way for more affordable housing and smarter development. The NDC believes Congress should:

- Shore up sustainable, long-term federal funding to support the development and maintenance of affordable housing
- Enact policies to improve regional planning decisions, encourage zoning reform, and promote transit-oriented housing development
- Provide more access for lower-income families to rent or own a home

More on those efforts. Also see [here](#).



MODERNIZE AMERICA'S INFRASTRUCTURE

Modernize and expand our nation's infrastructure for the 21st century

Problem: Across the country, our transportation and infrastructure systems are in dire need of modernization. We are faced with an outdated system increasingly unprepared to withstand our changing climate and severe natural disasters, and unable to meet even the most basic of needs, like providing clean drinking water to all Americans. Americans spend hours sitting in traffic on unsafe roads and among congestion-caused pollution, resulting in a less healthy public, lost productivity for our workers and businesses, and wasted time for American families.

Solution: The U.S. economy depends on a functioning transportation and infrastructure system that supports the movement of workers and goods around the country and facilitates international trade. In order to grow the American economy and build stronger communities, Democrats and Republicans need to work across the aisle to rebuild, repair, and expand our nation's infrastructure. The NDC believes Congress should:

- Modernize our nation's infrastructure by repairing existing assets, embracing new technologies, building projects to last, and embracing public-private partnerships where appropriate
- Encourage responsible regulatory streamlining that prioritizes environmental integrity while addressing unnecessary barriers to development
- Develop a transportation and infrastructure plan inclusive of non-traditional assets like public facilities, broadband, and energy grids
- Pursue policies that promote resilience and the decarbonization of our transportation and infrastructure system

More in [NDC's Four Pillars for an Infrastructure Deal](#) and [the NDC's letter to President Trump](#).



FUND AND FINANCE INFRASTRUCTURE

Fix the funding and financing of our infrastructure

Problem: It has been nearly three decades since the federal gas tax, the main federal revenue source for road infrastructure investment, was last increased. As fuel efficiency, electric vehicles, and other alternative transportation modes have increased, the Federal government has also failed to develop new funding resources. The need for investment has soared while federal infrastructure trust funds have been raided for other priorities or become insolvent, leaving a widening investment gap between our significant infrastructure needs and our dwindling funding resources.

Solution: To meet the needs of today's infrastructure investment gap, it is crucial the U.S. modernizes its infrastructure funding and financing mechanisms. Congress needs to stop kicking the can down the road and put forth a bipartisan solution to fund the nation's infrastructure needs. The NDC believes Congress should:

- Replenish and protect existing trust funds, and create new, reliable and dedicated funding sources for the development and maintenance of our infrastructure
- Ensure the federal government pays its fair share and make it easier for local and state governments to use and maximize existing financing programs and tools
- Embrace innovative funding and financing mechanisms, including exploring new revenue streams like vehicle miles traveled (VMT) fees, creating a national infrastructure bank, and encouraging the investment of private capital.

[More in NDC's Fund It, Fix It, Foster It Infrastructure Priorities.](#)



LEAD GLOBAL CLIMATE ACTION

Lead the international community in confronting climate change and the risks it poses to the health and safety of our planet

Problem: Climate change is an existential threat to the health, national security, economic prosperity, and future of our people and planet. The longer we wait to act, the more dramatic the environmental, economic, and social costs of climate change become.

Solution: The United States must be a responsible part of the international community and should act as a global leader by advancing climate solutions that strengthen our economy and national security while urging other nations to act. The NDC believes Congress should:

- Take global action by reengaging with the international community and rejoining multilateral efforts to combat climate change
- Reclaim U.S. leadership of climate solutions by developing next-generation technologies and securing energy independence
- Address the national security threats of climate change to U.S. military installations and operations, and in unstable regions around the world

[More on those bills](#), the [NDC's Priorities for U.S. Climate Policy](#), [the Select Committee on the Climate Crisis' Member Day Hearing](#).



TRANSITION TO A CLIMATE-FORWARD ECONOMY

Transition to a climate-forward economy that promotes American workers, communities, & innovators

Problem: We must take immediate action to address the threat of climate change. Existing inequities in federal policies, barriers to the deployment of climate-forward technologies and underinvestment in research and development, and a lack of long-term, stable price signals has prevented the U.S. from making necessary progress in addressing climate goals. Transitioning to a climate-forward economy will also present challenges for workers and communities on the frontline of environmental injustice.

Solution: To respond to this threat, it is crucial the U.S. pursues long-term, durable solutions that are pro-climate, market-based, and community oriented to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 at the latest. Our solution must leverage every decarbonization tool available to advance a swift and just transition to a more sustainable planet and economy. The NDC believes Congress should:

- Enact economy-wide, market-based solutions that cultivate market certainty, like carbon pricing, as well as sector-specific policies that address the challenges unique to certain industries

- Minimize market barriers and encourage and invest in research, development, demonstration, and deployment of all decarbonization technologies
- Invest in frontline communities and workers to ensure a just transition and the creation of high-quality jobs
- Foster adaptation and resilience, and improve disaster response, relief, and recovery

More on [NDC's Priorities for U.S. Climate Policy](#) and the [NDC's letter with the House Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition and the Congressional Progressive Caucus to House Leadership](#).



RESTORE AMERICAN GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

Re-exert America's role as a global leader and reinforce the United States' commitment to the international order that has guided the world since World War II

Problem: Under the Trump administration, the United States has retreated from its role as a global leader, neglected its role in providing aid and promoting democratic values and prosperity around the world, and abandoned or undermined its own alliances and strategic agreements while embracing despots in adversarial nations.

Solution: The United States' position as a global leader requires an enduring commitment to robust and resilient alliances that stand up to our adversaries. The U.S. is made stronger through its alliances and its leadership role in international organizations around the world. While the Executive Branch has a certain level of independence on national security matters, the administration's actions are still subject to Congressional oversight and authority. The NDC believes Congress should:

- Recommit to the multilateral agreements and regional commitments – including NATO – that have strengthened America and its allies, so our nation is ready to lead in the new era of great-power competition
- Build bipartisan consensus and Congressional oversight into America's national security strategy so our allies and adversaries alike can remain confident that America will follow through with its commitments
- Exert Congressional authority over the consequential decision to go to war
- Enact a smart national security agenda that embraces all of our tools, including fully funded and staffed diplomatic and development initiatives around the globe
- Ensure Congress's power of the purse is respected so that the Executive Branch cannot raid diplomatic, national security, and defense funding for political purposes

[More on those efforts.](#)



RESTORE TRADE LEADERSHIP

Reassert U.S. leadership of a pro-growth trade agenda and reverse the Trump Administration's protectionist and isolationist policies

Problem: President Trump's protectionist trade strategy is unwinding America's position in the global economy and jeopardizing our long-term economic and national security goals. Ceding leadership of the global economic order will negatively impact U.S. jobs, agriculture, manufacturing and our geo-political standing for years to come.

Solution: Congress should pursue a trade agenda that respects the rules-based trading system, enacts new agreements that meet the needs of a 21st century economy, and promotes American excellence and values abroad. It is imperative the United States continues setting the rules for the global economy, rather than have them set by others. The NDC believes Congress should:

- Reclaim congressional oversight and authority over U.S. trade policy
- Reassert American leadership and support for multilateral institutions and trade agreements
- Prioritize opening new markets for U.S. businesses, workers, farmers, and ranchers
- Modernizing existing trade agreements to reflect the 21st century economy

[More on those efforts.](#)



LEAD ON TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Foster innovation and development of the 21st century technology in the U.S.

Problem: Many of the technological and scientific advancements Americans enjoy today are the result of federal research and development investments. Unfortunately, at a time when the need for innovation and new advances has never been greater, the federal government has been investing less and less in direct and indirect support for research and development.

Solution: Investing in and encouraging more research and development is critical to the United States leading on scientific and technological breakthroughs and development. Inventing and developing those technologies in the U.S. creates jobs and strengthens our national security by ensuring U.S. values are at the foundation of those technologies. The NDC believes Congress should:

- Enact federal policies that foster the ethical development of advanced technologies that protect the interests of individuals, including consumers and workers

- Increase federal investments to support research and development to ensure the U.S. continues to lead on the innovation and production of cutting-edge technology
- Develop and build next-generation technologies in the U.S. to both create jobs and ensure those technologies do not compromise American values or national security



SECURE THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

Secure American leadership of the digital economy, consumer privacy, and cyber engagement

Problem: The 21st century economy encapsulates an entire world of technology unimaginable in the 20th century, but Congress has only just begun the work of updating the laws to reflect those changes. Artificial Intelligence and a growing digital economy are part of an evolving landscape that is putting new challenges on the map, from privacy and transparency online to cyber security and digital trade.

Solution: The U.S. should set the rules for the digital economy, enshrining American values of innovation, transparency, and individual privacy. The NDC believes Congress should:

- Modernize its international trade agreements to reflect the 21st century economy and entrench American values of freedom, privacy, and competition in the digital world
- Enact a pro-consumer, pro-innovation national information, data, and privacy standard, and establish transparency requirements
- Invest in cybersecurity capabilities, standards, resilience, and response for critical infrastructure, the private sector, local governments, and more
- Engage with its global counterparts to develop rules of cyber engagement and define acceptable practices, as well as those that constitute an act of war or aggression

[More on those bills](#) and [the NDC's Safeguarding Our Economy and Our Future](#).



RESTORE TRUST IN ELECTIONS

Reform our election and campaign finance laws

Problem: Trust in government is at an all-time low, with over three-quarters of Americans expressing declining confidence in the federal government, according to a recent Pew survey. To make matters worse, waves of unlimited dark money and foreign governments are attacking American values and the integrity of our elections, further sowing distrust in our nation's democracy.

Solution: Elections are an opportunity for the American people to choose their leaders, whom they entrust to make decisions on behalf of the collective good. Free and fair elections are a cornerstone of American democracy. Congress should make sure all eligible Americans are able to vote, and that the will of the people is not drowned out by dark money and the meddling of foreign governments. The NDC believes Congress should:

- Restore and improve voting rights laws to make sure all Americans have access to the ballot box
- End gerrymandering so elected officials truly represent the electorate
- Overturn Citizen's United and increase transparency in campaign contributions
- Protect our elections from foreign interference

[More on those bills.](#)



ENACT FISCAL REFORM

Pursue a long-term approach to address structural causes of our growing deficits and debts

Problem: The nation's debt continues to grow at an unsustainable rate. On the current trajectory, the U.S.'s budget deficits become unsustainable, further squeezing the important investments that will help create good-paying jobs, make the economy work better for everyone, support retirees, and keep the country safe.

Solution: Congress should pursue a bipartisan, long-term approach to address structural causes on both sides of the ledger of the nation's growing deficits and debt. The NDC believes Congress should:

- Be transparent about the fiscal state of the nation
- Maintain and strengthen pay-as-you-go budget rules
- Reform the Congressional Budget & Appropriations process to ensure regular order and responsible budgeting to address long-term opportunities and challenges



REINVIGORATE GOVERNMENT

Make government work better for the American people

Problem: Too many Americans see government as the problem instead of part of the solution. With trillions of dollars spent every year, it is unsustainable to have a government the American people lack confidence in.

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Solution: The federal government should be efficient, effective, and easy to engage. The NDC believes Congress should:

- Modernize Congress to make it work more efficiently and effectively in a way that promotes consensus building.
- Make federal agencies more accountable and accessible to Americans
- Ensure competent, non-partisan responses to health and national emergencies
- Spend tax dollars wisely and responsibly