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### PEOPLE AND PLANET FIRST—time permitting

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# PEOPLE AND PLANET FIRST—time permitting

By: Jennifer Gilbert



Is it just me or is there something about election time that makes politicians overly ambitious? The candidates for the 2020 presidential election are fighting to convince American voters they are the best choice. One of the most common tactics for accomplishing this is providing voters with an unattainable amount of promises for making our problems magically disappear.

While these ambitions are “attention-grabbing” and somewhat successful in acquiring votes, so many of them go unaccomplished or un-addressed once the candidate enters the white house. No candidate, from any party, is immune to this infectious tendency that accompanies running a campaign.

Julián Castro’s Green New Deal is displaying promising symptoms of this contagious concept. Castro’s plan can be summarized by nearly twenty bullet points aimed at addressing the injustice of our environmental crisis, framing the matter as a “civil rights issue”. While this all sounds incredibly productive and necessary, the vision of this candidate’s ability to inflict progress within the system may be a tad optimistic.

Castro’s \$10 trillion plan to combat global warming includes net zero carbon emissions by 2045, investment in renewable energy, taxes on carbon polluters, and an end to fossil fuels. Environmentalists are swooning, but the problem lie with the realists who suggest this plan is too ambitious for the timeline provided. Even more concern lies within the void of financial responsibility, as Castro has failed to justify how he will fund this plan.

Specific costs regarding these proposals include an estimated \$200 billion investment toward developing and implementing Green Infrastructure such as smart grids, water management, and electric vehicle charging stations. Additionally, Castro wants to devote \$100 billion over 10 years to address conservation of water and soil resources. Half of this cost will come from the federal government and half of it from state, local, and private investment ([Collins](#)).

As one of the few democratic candidates to release such a thorough and in-depth plan for addressing our environmental crisis, Castro's Green New Deal is more than impressive. Unfortunately, the biggest flaw with this plan is the waning credibility of each goal that cannot be financially backed with specific funding strategies. For example, the \$50 billion coming from federal government will need to be redistributed from some source in the budget. Will new taxes be imposed to cover this, or will other sectors have to forfeit funding to cover the Green New Deal?

While there is no doubt the objectives of this plan need to be met, the lack of motivation, collaboration, and productive action taken by the U.S. government in the past does not bode well for the ambitious efforts of Castro's plans. Not to mention, funding for environmental progress has historically met great obstacles. Politicians know better than anyone that the world runs on money.

That said, the technology developed to address these issues has made remarkable progress and unbelievable advancement in the last thirty years. With predictions for insurmountable innovation and product-development in the future, it is tough to imagine a country built on empowerment unable to utilize such advancements to address global climate change.

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), renewable energy will continue rapidly expanding its contribution to the energy production sector, making up 40% of global energy consumption over the next five years [2018-2023] (Renewables 2018). The question is not whether these renewable energy sources will grow and contribute, but whether humans will efficiently utilize this technology to achieve carbon neutrality.

Despite reservations and cautious optimism, Castro's plan is robust, all-encompassing, and incredibly thorough. Regardless of the timeline, these goals must be strived for and achieved in the near future to ensure a healthier planet and population. Perhaps the most effective and innovated technology that will drive this plan forward is yet to come.

Given the appropriate tools and motivated political climate, Castro's plan is attainable and necessary. The most pressing call to action that Castro must address with his plan is a financial plan and budget as specific as his goals to build credibility and assure attainable results. Without this, Castro's promises to address environmental issues are as empty as his pockets to fund them.

Challenging the citizens of this country to strive for environmental progress is an admirable and brave stance for any politician to uphold. One piece of advice for Castro—get started now! It is important that any political candidate pledging environmental action is taking preemptive measures to build the foundational framework their ambition plans need for success.

Three words for Castro—time is ticking.

Castro's full climate change plan can be found [here](#).