

NON-NEGOTIABLE #5

Climate Action

PROTECT TODAY, PRESERVE TOMORROW



Climate change represents the ultimate existential challenge facing humanity, yet our response has been characterized by delay, denial, and half-measures.

Despite overwhelming scientific evidence dating back to Eunice Foote's 1856 discovery of the heat-trapping effect of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, we have failed to take the decisive action necessary to prevent catastrophic warming.

The scientific consensus on climate change has been clear for decades. In 1896, Svante Arrhenius calculated how variations in atmospheric CO₂ concentrations could influence Earth's surface temperature.

By 1978, Exxon scientists were discussing the greenhouse effect and predicting the collapse of the Western Antarctic Ice Sheet, with internal reports warning of widespread disaster including multimeter sea level rise and the flooding of coastal cities. Rather than alert the public, Exxon launched a sophisticated misinformation campaign to protect its business interests.

Even the U.S. military has long recognized the threat.

A [1990 Naval War College report](#) predicted that climate change would affect "nearly every aspect of the world's political, cultural and economic interests," potentially creating masses of "environmental refugees."

Subsequent [Pentagon](#) and [intelligence agencies reports](#) have consistently identified climate change as a "threat multiplier" that would exacerbate existing challenges like food and water scarcity, poverty, political instability, and mass migration.

Despite this knowledge, our response has been woefully inadequate.

Under the Obama administration, efforts focused on calculating the "social cost of carbon" and establishing regulatory frameworks rather than implementing transformative policies.

The administration boasted about "decoupling" economic growth from carbon emissions, but as critics noted, much of this was simply shifting from coal to natural gas—trading one fossil fuel for another.

The Trump administration dismantled even these modest efforts, and while the Biden administration rejoined the Paris Agreement and allocated infrastructure funding, it simultaneously opened up drilling leases that increased fossil fuel production to record levels.

This pattern of inadequate response stems from what behavioral economists call "present bias" or "myopic loss aversion"—our tendency to value immediate gratification over long-term benefits.

Just as many individuals struggle to maintain healthy diets or exercise routines despite knowing their importance, our society consistently chooses short-term economic gains over the long-term health of our planet.

Our addiction to fossil fuels, to consumption, to "more, more, more" has created externalities that affect regions experiencing none of the benefits of our consumer lifestyle.

The blunt reality is that the climate crisis has progressed to a point where even immediate, comprehensive action would take decades to reverse the warming already locked in.

According to climate scientists, if we implemented every proposed solution tomorrow—from renewable energy and nuclear power to regenerative agriculture and carbon capture—it would still take 50 years to bring Earth's temperature back to current equilibrium. Carbon is cumulative, and what was set in motion 50 years ago is what we're experiencing today.

Given this sobering assessment, the 5th Non-Negotiable proposes the establishment of a Climate Trust funded by Social Security tax dollars collected on earnings over \$400,000 per individual or household per year.

With the top 2-3% of income earners representing 15-20% of all income (approximately \$4 trillion annually), a 6% tax would generate around \$240 billion per year for the Trust.

Incorporating the Trust payments into a comprehensive Social Security Reform package that lifts the cap on all earners serves a dual purpose.

First, it ensures that all income generated in the nation is subject to the full deduction of funds thereby shoring up the Social Security Trust in perpetuity.

And second, it acknowledges the imbalance of carbon emissions among high income households in the country and forces them to cover their share of the related consequences.

These "rainy day funds" would be allocated based on the share of total emissions sourced directly to the United States' industrial activity over the past 150 years.

If climate projections prove accurate, future policymakers would then have substantial resources to address the damage, with 78% allocated domestically and 22% for climate refugees from other nations (reflecting America's estimated historical contribution to global emissions).

In order to tackle both immediate needs and long-term consequences of climate change, Congress would have the authority to apportion a percentage of these funds to offset the costs associated with the Civilian Labor Corps resilience and mitigation activities.

Crucially, Congress would be prohibited from utilizing these funds for disaster relief within the United States—this implies that Congress would restore funding and authorization to FEMA to manage disasters and step into the market when private insurance companies flee. Prohibiting the co-mingling of these funds ensures the integrity of the trust.

This approach acknowledges our collective failure while expressing faith in future generations to manage the crisis we've created. The Climate Trust connects directly to our other Non-Negotiables: the Civilian Labor Corps would provide the workforce needed for climate mitigation and adaptation projects; Medicare for All would ensure that health impacts from climate change don't bankrupt families; Housing First would address climate-driven displacement; and getting money out of politics would remove the fossil fuel industry's stranglehold on climate policy.

While implementing the full range of climate solutions remains vital—from renewable energy and regenerative agriculture to sustainable transportation and carbon capture—the Climate Trust represents an acknowledgment that we must also prepare for the consequences of our delayed action. It's a recognition that climate justice requires both immediate efforts to reduce emissions and long-term financial commitment to address the harms already locked into our future.