

OPINION | EDWARD J. MARKEY

New Congress will bring a green wave on climate change



KAROLINA JONDERKO/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Yul Choi, a South Korean activist with the Korea Green Foundation, protests while wearing a stained Santa Claus costume outside the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Katowice, Poland, Dec. 10.

By Edward J. Markey DECEMBER 17, 2018

Climate change is the greatest threat facing human civilization. The world is warming at a deadly pace. The science is alarming in its clarity.

[Recent scientific reports](#) portend a future of global destruction unless we take immediate and transformational action to address this climate crisis, including higher temperatures, rising seas, billions in economic damage, and untold deaths.

But the response of the Trump administration to these calamitous forecasts was to partner with Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait to discredit the global

scientific consensus on the severity of the problem during the recent United Nations international climate negotiations.

We cannot afford to allow the Trump administration to waste any more time. We need bold, revolutionary action on climate. And we need it now.

Fortunately, the blue wave in the last election was also a green wave. We now have more members of Congress who want serious action on climate than ever before. In the next two years, we will have the opportunity to move America toward more forward-thinking energy policy and combat global warming.

My climate “to do” list in the Senate will look toward the future. We need to move the United States to 100 percent clean energy within the next two decades. We need to build on the leadership that Massachusetts is already showing by ushering in offshore wind, the next frontier of clean energy. We need to unleash energy efficiency across the country, allowing us to work smarter, not harder. We must stop the fossil fuel exports that are fueling our global addiction. **And we must lay down the markers for putting a price on carbon in order to achieve the massive reductions in carbon emissions that the science demands.**

These are my climate action priorities, and I will be introducing the legislation to confront these challenges and to reduce pollution, expand clean energy, protect consumers, and unleash American innovation.

In the upcoming Congress, we will have multiple opportunities to take action on climate change. We will take up comprehensive legislation to modernize our nation’s infrastructure. We must seize this opportunity to double down on our commitment to lead the world into the next era of clean energy, fortify and armor our communities to combat the adverse impacts of climate change, and adopt green infrastructure that enhances our communities and protects our environment.

That means going far beyond merely spending tens of billions of dollars on highway projects. What we need is a major paradigm shift. For every dollar spent on our nation’s roads, we must spend no less than one dollar on 21st-century clean energy, one dollar on more sustainable transportation options, and one dollar on our drinking and wastewater systems. For every highway, for every energy project, every single dollar needs to be spent with a proper accounting of climate change and resilience. That’s the formula necessary for America to lead the world into the 21st-century green economy.

Any tax package that Congress considers in the next year needs to prioritize renewable energy and electric vehicles.

And Congress needs to use the power of the purse to ensure that our federal spending prioritizes clean energy, climate change, and science, and restricts the ability of the Trump administration to take actions that would move us further away from our climate goals. That is a litmus test that must be applied to all spending bills from now on.

Taken together, these actions can put us on the path to avoid climate catastrophe. We have the economic imperative to create opportunities and jobs for all. But more than that, we have the moral imperative to protect our planet for future generations.

In the 116th Congress, we will have that chance to make history. We must seize that change. Now is the time for a new Green Deal.

US Senator Edward J. Markey of Massachusetts is former chair of the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming and the author of the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009.