Energy and climate security sits at the critical crossroads of national security, economic, foreign and domestic policymaking it a complex but essential element of national discourse after the 2020 election. Climate change is a “threat multiplier” that exacerbates other risks, including social and environmental injustice. In addressing energy and climate security, policymakers across the United States have an opportunity to connect with a broad range of stakeholders and build unity on the preeminent issue of the next decade. This document offers progressive and center-right talking points on a range of climate and energy security issues, including:

- Renewable Energy
- Energy Security
- Water Security
- Climate and Environmental Justice
- Resilience
- The Paris Agreement and 1.5°C
Renewable Energy

While the climate and economic consequences of fossil fuels and other legacy forms of energy are obvious, current policy does not fully realize the opportunity for job growth and technology advancement from investing in a thriving clean energy industry. President-elect Biden’s climate change and environmental justice plan reinforces and supports the movement underway to harness the full technological and economic potential of the fastest growing sector of the energy industry. When coupled with the evolving topography of the US electrical grid, in which coal fell to a 42-year low in 2019, we have an opportunity to inform policymakers of renewables’ true potential to meet the needs of a growing number of constituencies. State and local officials are already setting ambitious targets for the installation and use of renewable energy because they understand its benefits: well-paying jobs, local economic development, consumer choice, and cost reduction. President-elect Biden’s plan accelerates this low-carbon transition nationwide, calling for a complete decarbonization of the U.S. electrical grid by 2035.

**TALKING POINTS:**

**Progressive**

- America must harness our technology and innovation to create a clean, renewable economy and to create a sustainable and healthy world for our children.

- President-elect Biden’s climate change and environmental justice plan represents an opportunity for America to lead on building a zero-carbon energy grid.

- America was built on industry and hard work. We have reached a point when new sources of energy present opportunities to renew and strengthen our workforce, our businesses, and our communities. We must pursue policies that support a just transition and ensure our workforce is put first.

**Center-right**

- Renewable energy enables the U.S. to rebuild our economy and provide prosperity for all Americans.

- Today, renewables, including wind and solar, save you money on your electric bill while creating well-paying American jobs in all 50 states. The two fastest-growing jobs in the US are wind energy technician and solar panel installer.

- Investing in renewable energy supports local jobs and boosts local tax revenue

- Wind and solar are drought-proof technologies that will generate revenue regardless of weather conditions.
Energy Security

The global military engagements embroiling US forces around the globe over many decades spotlight the nexus between our national dependence on imported oil and our domestic energy impact on national security. The consequences of climate change on military readiness combined with increased, sustained operational tempo (deployments) will push the armed forces to the brink. Reducing this demand comes with the ability to restore leverage in some of our foreign relationships and reduce the corresponding need for military capability to maintain supply routes. Additionally, the current cyber risk environment means the homeland is no longer a sanctuary; military readiness is heavily dependent on civilian energy infrastructure in order to execute critical national defense missions. Ensuring the integrity of the supply chain of hardware, software, and essential grid components is essential to support mission assurance. A transition to a grid that is cleaner, more secure, and more resilient is vital to national security. The opportunity to bridge these two subject areas and demonstrate the value of clean technologies to better serve these security requirements represents an opportunity for bipartisan agreement.

**TALKING POINTS:**

**Progressive**

- Our reliance on oil leaves America dependent on hostile regimes, endangers the lives of our men and women in uniform, wastes trillions of dollars, and accelerates climate change.

- We should never trade the lives of American servicemembers to save money at the gas pump. We must protect them by advancing energy policy that supports their missions while reducing their need for deployments.

- Investing the resources to restructure our military’s dependence on fossil fuels will reduce our entanglements with governments boasting a legacy of human rights violations.

**Center-right**

- Energy security and national security are one of the same. I will pursue policies that protect our energy supply, keep our prices stable for our hard working families, and put our communities in the driver’s seat to make their own energy choices.

- The strength of America’s military should no longer be squandered to prop up foreign oil suppliers who wish harm to our country and do not embrace American values.
Water Security

The disaster in Flint, Michigan remains with us, reminding us that though clean, safe, affordable water is a necessity and basic human right, it is, sadly, far from reality for many, even in the richest nation on Earth. UN-Water defines water security as "the capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to adequate quantities of acceptable quality water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being, and socio-economic development, for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water-related disasters, and for preserving ecosystems in a climate of peace and political stability." Millions of Americans are exposed to contaminated drinking water from former industrial sites and poorly managed or nonexistent municipal systems, with contaminants such as lead and arsenic causing permanent brain damage in children.

Water security is most especially an environmental justice issue that disproportionately affects low-income communities and communities of color. Other regions could face looming water shortages – including the cities of Phoenix, Los Angeles, and Miami – due to a dangerous combination of rapid population growth, poor planning, and climate change, which are stressing limited water supplies. Major aquifers serving vast regions of the United States are being drained, with more rural wells running permanently dry every year.

Internationally, water risks such as droughts, floods, and contamination can undermine human well-being, which in turn contributes to political instability, violent conflict, human displacement and migration, and acute food insecurity. Climate change causes wet areas to get wetter and dry areas to get dryer, further heightening existing vulnerabilities and stressing existing areas of instability.

Talking Points:

Progressive

• Water security is a leading-edge indicator and threat multiplier of vulnerabilities and instabilities.

• Climate change is putting already vulnerable communities in a position of greater instability, including the most basic human right of water security.

• Conflict over increasingly scarce potable water will further drive the displacement of the most vulnerable, exposing millions to human rights abuses and exploitation.

Center-right

• Ensuring people everywhere have access to high quality and quantity drinking water maintains livelihoods and prevents instability that can give rise to conflict, both domestically and abroad.

• Increasing water-well depletion across rural America dramatically threatens our ability to sustain agriculture in critical food-producing areas. We need solutions that protect our heartland against the ravages of a diminishing water supply.

• Water is currency, and water is a signal to the world. We must secure safe and clean water for our cities, suburbs, and rural areas to thrive. Otherwise, America cannot claim the moral authority to be a leader in this world.
Climate and Environmental Justice

Climate change and social inequality are inexorably linked, not only because climate change affects people of color and low-income communities at a higher rate, but because they are defining issues for maintaining the fundamental social and economic security of our nation. The people most vulnerable to the effects of climate change are also those with the least amount of financial and political capital to assess prioritized needs and invest resources. Environmental degradation will only expand economic disparity as infrastructure investments continue to occur where customers have the greatest ability to pay through increased rates or private financing -- while those more vulnerable are left unable to mitigate the future effects of climate change. These impacts are felt in transportation systems, access to clean energy, housing efficiency and affordability, food availability, water security, and so many other systems. Additionally, continuing racial injustices and the resulting discord force disadvantaged communities to combat multiple existential crises simultaneously. Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson describes the issue: “I need you to understand that our racial inequality crisis is intertwined with our climate crisis. If we don’t work on both, we will succeed at neither.” The compound effect of environmental injustice erodes national security by undermining the unity of effort needed to address the host of challenges our nation faces. This erosion impacts both geopolitical adversaries and the natural disasters that, when not properly mitigated, absorb the essential funding and government/military resources better employed to achieve the security deserved equally by all Americans.

**TALKING POINTS:**

**Progressive:**
- We cannot properly address climate change without placing social inequalities and the means to address them at the center of policy action.
- We must ensure climate policy directly addresses economic disparity by investing resources in low income and communities of color.
- A worsening climate amplifies every challenge of poverty. We must act on climate as a means to improve social justice across the nation.

**Center-right**
- Investments in infrastructure are long overdue, and the areas most vulnerable to disruption from climate change must be prioritized to ensure the long-term survival of our communities and local businesses.
- The effects of climate change are already dragging our economy downward. We must address climate change to reduce the burden on our taxpayer-funded institutions that protect those most in need.
Resilience

Resilience in the face of climate catastrophe requires the foresight and willingness to invest in our innate ability to adapt. The hardship incurred by the people of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands during the 2017 hurricane-induced disasters thrust this issue to the forefront. We must ensure our country can withstand impacts to our electrical grid, water and, food supplies, and healthcare systems. Ultimately, these critical needs require assured electrical generation and adaptable communities.

The rapidly growing effects of increasingly severe weather, including recovery costs from natural disasters brought about by climate change, and our corresponding dependence on electricity for more basic daily needs, make electricity an essential commodity to sustain our day-to-day lives. Ensuring the availability of electricity will come only as the result of coordinated efforts to integrate emerging green technologies like grid-scale batteries, micro grids to support critical infrastructure, and the continued adoption of distributed energy resources from renewable sources. State-level officials should be particularly sensitive to this issue because they are much closer to their affected constituents and face the political consequences of extreme weather events.

**TALKING POINTS:**

**Progressive**

- It’s imperative that our communities be prepared for increasingly severe weather events. Clean energy enables more resilient communities with good-paying jobs and resources for the long term.

- Those who did the least to cause this crisis are the ones most likely to be displaced by it. Protection of vulnerable populations, both at home and abroad, must be prioritized as we prepare for climate-related threats such as rising seas and stronger, more intense droughts and floods.

- We must empower and fund our communities to update and improve infrastructure to be prepared and resilient.

**Center-right**

- Extreme weather events are threatening our military bases, our ports, and our coastlines, so we must improve our infrastructure to protect our readiness.

- Climate security is food security: without significant investment in protecting our nation’s farmers from the effects of extreme weather, our grocery bills will skyrocket further, and the strength of America’s rural communities will fade away.

- The increasing frequency of severe weather events presents an opportunity to create jobs, retrofitting existing buildings, and preparing businesses and homes to withstand any such events.
Paris Agreement and 1.5°C

In 2015, 196 nations signed the historic Paris Agreement, agreeing to shared responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions mitigation, adaptation, and finance. In June 2017, President Trump announced his intention to withdraw the United States from the agreement, which took legal effect on November 4, 2020 (the day after Election Day). But U.S. subnational actors (corporations, investors, cities, states, and others) have proven they are already on track to cut emissions 24 percent, within striking distance of the U.S. pledge to cut emissions 26-28 percent by 2025.

We have already experienced 1°C of warming since preindustrial times, and the current level of commitments put the world on course for a disastrous 3°C of warming. In 2018, the world’s leading climate scientists warned there are only 12 years to keep warming below a maximum of 1.5°C, beyond which even half a degree will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat, water stress, food security, and poverty for hundreds of millions of people. This landmark report stressed the need for urgency in addressing all areas of emissions reduction—including renewable energy, electric vehicles, halting tropical deforestation, using agricultural lands as sinks, and investing in natural and engineered carbon capture and storage projects—to avoid the catastrophic breakdown of global systems with significant national security implications.

**TALKING POINTS:**

**Progressive**

- President Trump was wrong to turn our back on 195 other countries. America can no longer turn our back on the greatest threat faced by humanity. The world created this problem together; we must solve it together.

- Climate change is a threat to the global community, and as the historically greatest emitter, America is responsible for leading efforts to address this crisis. As an elected official, I will work to restore America's global leadership.

- We have a responsibility to the global community to make the changes required to ensure all people can live in a safe and stable climate. We must lead from the front and inspire others to join us to ensure a livable planet for our children, grandchildren and their grandchildren.

**Center-right**

- Crises from floods to extreme weather threaten our military, farmers, and factories. If we don’t set the terms to address this, others will set them for us.

- The innovative American spirit has driven multitudes of lasting improvements across the globe. Now is the time for us to reclaim our role of leading the world in making a shared sustainable future.

- The global economy is shifting, and if we regress into a dependence on coal, our economy will be left behind. We must lead the decarbonization of the global economy, training our workers on the jobs of the future, not the jobs of the past.