

## AOC: U.S. infrastructure, climate, health crises deserve \$10 trillion investment



By Jake Johnson

Members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus made it clear that while President Joe Biden's roughly \$2.3 trillion infrastructure proposal is a welcome start, they believe the final package must be far more ambitious if it is to truly transform America's fossil fuel-dominated energy system and bring the country into line with crucial climate targets.

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) said in an appearance on MSNBC late Wednesday that ideally the top-line number would be around \$10 trillion in spending on core infrastructure, renewable energy, healthcare improvements, and other key priorities over the next decade, a level of investment the New York Democrat presented as necessary to match the scale of the crises facing the country.

"That may be an eye-popping figure for some people," said Ocasio-Cortez, a leading Green New Deal advocate. "But we need to understand that we are in a devastating economic moment, millions of people in the U. S. are unemployed, we have a truly crippled healthcare system, and a planetary crisis on our hands — and we're the wealthiest nation in the history of the world. So, we can do \$10 trillion."

The chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D-Wash.), issued a similar message in a statement released just ahead of Biden's speech in Pittsburgh, where he

sketched the broad outlines of his plan and promised "transformational progress in our effort to tackle climate change with American jobs and American ingenuity."

"We believe this package can and should be substantially larger in size and scope," said Jayapal. "During his campaign, President Biden committed to a '\$2 trillion accelerated investment' over four years on climate-focused infrastructure alone... Today's proposal, which includes many other priorities such

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as care jobs, will invest half that amount — roughly \$2 trillion over eight years — or 1% of GDP. It makes little sense to narrow his previous ambition on infrastructure or compromise with the physical realities of climate change."

The Washington Democrat went on to voice her

**While President Joe Biden's roughly \$2.3 trillion infrastructure proposal is a welcome start, some believe the final package must be far more ambitious.**

caucus' preference for a single, sweeping package encompassing infrastructure spending and health insurance expansions, child care and long-term care, and other measures, rather than two separate pieces of legislation. Biden is expected to unveil the healthcare-focused portion of his package — titled the American Families Plan — some time this month.

In his remarks late Wednesday afternoon, Biden stressed the urgency of “bold” action on climate and characterized his proposal as “a once-in-a generation investment in America,” but environmentalists and progressive lawmakers said major improvements are needed to align the actual package with the president’s lofty rhetoric.

Given Democrats’ narrow majorities in both the House and Senate, progressive lawmakers have significant leverage over the size and scope of the final package, which will likely be pushed through the filibuster-proof budget reconciliation process amid Republican opposition. Whether the CPC is

willing to use its power to force dramatic changes to the legislation remains to be seen.

Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.), the CPC whip, said in a statement Wednesday that “in addition to the proposals the president laid out, we must use this moment to dramatically lower drug prices, expand Medicare to millions of people, make college more affordable, strengthen the care economy, provide a roadmap to citizenship for our immigrant communities, address the housing crisis, and make much bolder investments in green jobs.”

“Now is not the time to remain beholden to a bankrupt, unpopular ideology that allows the richest people in the world to continue paying next to nothing in taxes, while millions starve in our streets,” Omar added. “Now is the time to be bold, to tackle the once-in-a-millennium challenge of the climate crisis, and to ensure that we as a country at long last live up to our promise of justice for all.”

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## French Farmers protest fertilizer tax

By Al Neal

**T**he low pitch rumble and hum of tractor engines and the thump, thump, thump of steel-capped leather boots filled the streets of Clermont Ferrand, France, as over 2,000 French farmers and 400 tractors marched and rolled into Place de Jaude, the city square, on March 25.

Farmers descended into the town in protest over new legislation aimed at taxing the use of nitrogen fertilizer. It was a show of union power against a national food law and CAP (European Union’s common agricultural policy) reform, according to FNSEA (Federation Nationale des Syndicats d’exploitants agricoles), France’s largest farmers union, and Jeunes Agriculteurs (national youth farmer organization).

Tractor after tractor rammed down lamp posts and street signs, while others dumped manure into the streets and sidewalks. The 10:00 a.m. protest was dispersed by 5:00 p.m. as French police, squaring off against machine and farmer alike, fired tear gas into the crowd.

The new Climate and Resilience Bill, which farmers describe as a “punitive and unfair” nitrogen fee, would “stigmatize” the use of chemical

fertilizer without providing any alternatives, the FNSEA said. The union went on to say the new legislation had ignored the changes already taking place in farmers’ practices and would reduce farm incomes without giving a “real response” to current climate issues.

The potential fertilizer fee coupled with the Egalim Law (French food law balancing producers and large-scale buyers), which has put agriculture produce prices well below production costs, could be disastrous to farmers and their families.

“There will be no food sovereignty in France without fair remuneration for farmers, who must make a decent living from their profession,” read a joint statement by the FSNEA and Jeunes Agriculteurs. “This fairer remuneration should make it possible to encourage young people to choose agriculture.

This action is just the latest in a string of demonstrations over the last 2 years by farmers against EU agriculture policies aimed at downsizing the EU’s farming subsidies program, along with protests in Ireland and Germany over similar cuts to agriculture subsidies, and a reduction in agriculture prices not suitable for production costs.

**Protests are part of a movement in other European countries that is particularly important to young people who want to go into farming.**

# Atlantic coast sea levels rising at fastest rate in 2,000 years, study finds



By Olivia Rosane

**Y**et another study has confirmed the unprecedented impacts of the climate crisis: Sea levels along the eastern U.S. are rising at their fastest rate in 2,000 years.

Researchers led by a team at the University of Rutgers studied sea level rise at six sites along the Atlantic coast. They found that the rate of change between 1900 and 2000 was more than double the average for the period between year 0 and 1800, Rutgers Today reported.

“The increasing influence of the global component is the most significant change in the sea-level budgets at all six sites,” the study authors wrote.

The research, published in *Nature Communications* on Tuesday, focused on sea level sites in Connecticut, New York City, North Jersey, South Jersey (Leeds Point and Cape May Courthouse), and North Carolina. The scientists examined sea-level budgets, which are the totality of regional, local and global factors that influence sea level change. Examples of regional factors include land subsidence, or sinking, while local factors include groundwater withdrawal, Rutgers Today explained. The study is the first to examine these factors across a large time frame at the Atlantic sites. Most sea level budget studies have only focused on the 20th and 21st centuries, and only on the global level.

The research found that the dominant force driving sea level change had shifted. During the totality of the 2,000 year period, land subsidence caused

by the retreating Laurentide ice sheet drove the change. However, in the last century, global forces took over.

“Where it used to be this regional land sinking being the dominant force, now it’s this global component, which is driven by the ice melt and warming of the oceans,” Jennifer S. Walker, lead author and Rutgers University-New Brunswick postdoctoral associate, told CNN.

Since 1950, the global climate crisis has driven 36 to 50 percent of sea level rise at all six sites, the authors determined.

The findings aren’t only important for understanding the scale of the current crisis, but also for helping policymakers deal with its consequences. Rising sea levels can increase sunny-day floods and make storms such as 2012’s Hurricane Sandy more extreme.

“The impacts from a big storm like that are just going to be exacerbated on top of (the rising seas),” Walker told CNN.

That is why the study chose to study individual locations across a wide period.

“Having a thorough understanding of sea-level change at sites over the long-term is imperative for regional and local planning and responding to future sea-level rise,” Walker told Rutgers Today. “By learning how different processes vary over time and contribute to sea-level change, we can more accurately estimate future contributions at specific sites.”

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### Democracy dies under Brazil's neo-fascist Bolsonaro

By Ben Chacko

**B**razil is “at the threshold of what is compatible with democracy,” the communist Governor of Maranhao state Flávio Dino has warned following a string of resignations from the army leadership.

President Jair Bolsonaro sacked defense minister Fernando Azevedo on Monday.

Though the move took place amid a wider reshuffle, critics say General Azevedo had declined to declare a state of emergency which would grant the army powers to reopen “essential services” closed by state governments because of the country’s intensifying Covid crisis. Three top generals handed in their resignations on Tuesday.

Mr. Bolsonaro has declined to impose lockdowns or social-distancing requirements centrally and has unsuccessfully tried to get the Supreme Court to overturn them when implemented at lower levels. New Defence Minister General Walter Souza Braga Netto is, like Mr. Bolsonaro but unlike Gen Azevedo, an open supporter of the military dictatorship that ruled Brazil from 1964-85 who says the army’s seizure of power then should be “celebrated.”

Brazil’s left warned that the president may look to the army to uphold his power as Covid deaths — now approaching a daily average of 3,000 — affect his popularity. He is likely to face popular former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva at the next elections, a contest he was spared last time because of Lula’s imprisonment on now discredited sleaze charges.

He noted that Sao Paulo’s social democrat Governor João Doria had to move into his government office because of security fears.

## Empresa privada de prisiones envenenó a inmigrantes en Adelanto

BY EARTHJUSTICE

**L**uego de siete meses de investigación, la Agencia de Protección Ambiental de los EE. UU. (EPA) emitió un informe final y un Aviso de Advertencia Oficial al Grupo GEO por múltiples violaciones en respuesta al uso indebido del pesticida tóxico HDQ Neutral dentro del Centro de Detención de Adelanto, California. La investigación de la EPA encontró que GEO, la compañía de prisiones privadas que administra Adelanto y más de 30 centros de detención adicionales de ICE en los EE.UU., ordenó al personal de esa empresa y a los que están bajo custodia administrar HDQ Neutral varias veces al día y sin una ventilación adecuada. Los ingredientes que se encuentran en el HDQ Neutral están vinculados con enfermedades como asma, infertilidad, defectos de nacimiento, y otros daños respiratorios y reproductivos. Uno de los ingredientes activos del HDQ Neutral puede incluso dañar el ADN humano.

La EPA basó su informe en entrevistas con el personal de GEO e inmigrantes detenidos en Adelanto, una instalación que puede albergar hasta 2 mil inmigrantes por día y está ubicado en el desierto al norte de San Bernardino. La EPA halló a GEO responsable de violar seis disposiciones diferentes de la etiqueta del pesticida, que se aplicó varias veces al día durante un período de nueve años. Esto equivale a un número no cuantificable — pero potencialmente a decenas de miles — de violaciones individuales durante ese espacio de tiempo.

A los migrantes que participaron en el programa de trabajo “voluntario” se les dio HDQ Neutral en botellas rociadoras de 32 onzas y baldes para

trapeadores, a menudo sin etiquetas de seguridad o instrucciones adjuntas y sin necesidad de usar un equipo de protección necesario al manipular el pesticida industrial.

La EPA también dijo que GEO no estaba diluyendo HDQ Neutral adecuadamente y exponía a los migrantes detenidos a una mezcla que estaba dos veces más concentrada de lo permitido. En respuesta, GEO dijo que la etiqueta permite una mezcla más concentrada de HDQ Neutral para “usos como desinfectante o viricida en instalaciones para animales”. Cuando la EPA preguntó sobre los informes de efectos adversos para la salud de las personas detenidas o las políticas cuando las personas se enferman, GEO se negó a responder.

“Este informe confirma lo que los detenidos saben desde hace mucho tiempo: que a GEO no le importa la salud ni la seguridad de los inmigrantes”, dijo la Coalición Shut Down Adelanto. “Pero más que eso, ni siquiera consideran a los inmigrantes como seres humanos.”

Las condiciones en los centros de detención de migrantes como Adelanto no son seguras, son inhumanas y no se puede permitir que sigan funcionando. El gobierno de los Estados Unidos continúa mostrando un flagrante desprecio por la salud de los detenidos, incluida la esterilización forzada, los brotes incontrolados de COVID-19, el abuso sexual y el intento de construir otras instalaciones en sitios altamente tóxicos. Earthjustice y Shut Down Adelanto Coalition exigen la liberación inmediata de todos los detenidos en centros de detención de migrantes.

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