



COVER CLIMATE

January 10, 2019

No Green Deal: Widespread Media Silence on One of the Biggest Climate Stories of 2018

In a year with several major climate stories, one of the most significant was the surge of support for a “Green New Deal” since the November 2018 election. The concept moved from the political fringe to a central place in climate politics almost in the space of a single day—Nov. 13, 2018, when the Sunrise Movement and Representative-elect Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez demonstrated in the office of then-presumptive House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to demand a Select Committee on a Green New Deal.

The first round of advocacy for a Green New Deal could be said to have ended on Dec. 28, 2018, when Pelosi effectively rejected calls for a House Select Committee on a Green New Deal by announcing that she would establish a House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis. The committee on the climate crisis [lacks key elements](#) that advocates for a Green New Deal committee sought, such as subpoena power, a requirement that members not take fossil fuel money, a mandate to draft legislation to fix the climate crisis within 10 years of enactment, and the inclusion of racial and economic justice in its focus.

Despite this setback, it is difficult to overstate the significance of the Green New Deal concept becoming a topic of serious discussion. As David Roberts wrote in Vox, this was “perhaps the first time in U.S. history that a Democrat has proposed [a plan for addressing climate change](#) that actually scales to the problem and has some chance of influencing the party’s agenda.”

Suddenly, we began having a national conversation about actually solving climate change—with a platform of [extraordinarily popular](#), beneficial solutions.

Or did we?

If one hewed to a certain media environment—say, *The Washington Post*, *The Huffington Post*, *Politico*, and *Vox*—then one might assume the Green New Deal has received an extraordinary amount of mostly positive attention. As one might expect, the topic is also getting strong negative attention among the likes of Fox News and *The Daily Caller*.

No less significant, however, is a vast desert of silence on the topic. A December 2018 poll found strong, bipartisan support for some of the likely policy details of a Green New Deal—but also found that 82 percent of registered voters had heard “[nothing at all](#)” about it.

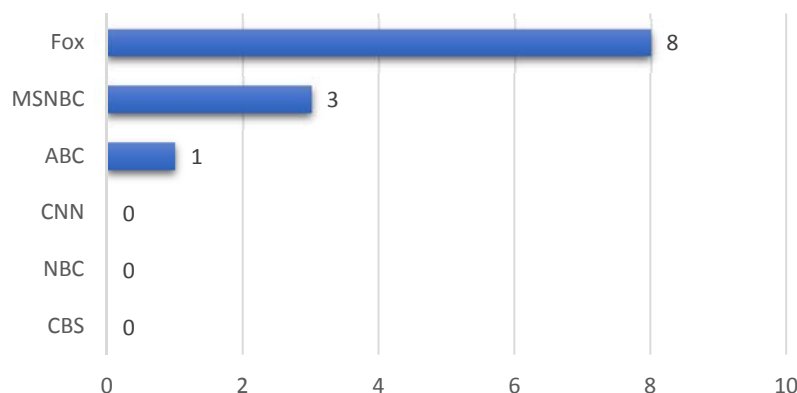
It's easy to see why. National broadcast news barely covered the effort to create a Select Committee on a Green New Deal. And among the top 50 U.S. newspapers by circulation, half didn't even print the words "Green New Deal" in 2018.

The analysis below focuses on the period Nov. 1, 2018 to Dec. 27, 2018, the day before Pelosi rejected the Select Committee on a Green New Deal—in other words, when strong media coverage could have made a difference in the first round of advocacy for a Green New Deal. We also provide numbers for 2018 as a whole.

Television news. From Nov. 1 to Dec. 27, major news networks largely ignored the Green New Deal during their morning and 4 p.m. to midnight blocks, with the exception of Fox News, which ran eight segments mentioning it. MSNBC ran three, and ABC ran one. .

ABC's mention was only a passing sentence by Republican strategist Amanda Carpenter on *This Week* on Nov. 25. NBC mentioned the Green New Deal in an extraordinary Dec. 30 *Meet the Press* episode devoted entirely to climate change. But that show aired two days after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi had rejected the call for a Select Committee on a Green New Deal. NBC also posted five pieces on its website. (Fox News posted seven and CNN two; ABC's and MSNBC's websites are not included in the data set used for this analysis.)

Mentions of a Green New Deal Nov. 1 to Dec. 27, 2018



Source: Public Citizen, using data from Nexis.

For broadcast television networks, our searches included morning shows, Sunday shows, and evening news. For cable television networks, the results presented include morning shows, Sunday morning shows, and the 4 p.m. to midnight block. (Only some of the networks provide transcripts for other times of day; we therefore omitted it for all networks. CNN had three

daytime segments mentioning the Green New Deal that are omitted from the totals for this reason.)

If one considers television coverage for the same time blocks for all of 2018, the picture changes modestly. Fox still leads with nine pieces, followed by MSNBC with four and CNN with two. ABC, NBC, and CBS had only one each. ABC's and NBC's segments are discussed above. CBS's was an interview with Ocasio-Cortez on "Face the Nation" on July 22, 2018.

Newspapers. During the period Nov. 1 to Dec. 27, only half of the top 50 U.S. newspapers by circulation printed anything on the Green New Deal. Two of the papers (*The Columbus Dispatch* and the *East Bay Times*) printed only letters to the editor, leaving just 23 papers that printed an article or opinion column mentioning it.

Leading newspapers were *The Boston Globe*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, with four mentions each, although one of *The Wall Street Journal's* was negative. Table 2 has full data on the top 50 papers that mentioned the Green New Deal.

Table 1. Number of print pieces mentioning the Green New Deal in U.S. newspapers that rank in the top 50 by circulation, Nov. 1 to Dec. 27, 2018.

Newspaper	Pieces
Boston Globe	4
Wall Street Journal	4
Washington Post	4
Buffalo News	2
Chicago Sun-Times	2
Chicago Tribune	2
Detroit Free Press	2
Los Angeles Times	2
New York Times	2
Philadelphia Inquirer	2
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	2
Seattle Times	2
Baltimore Sun	1
Denver Post	1
Mercury News	1
Miami Herald	1
Orange County Register	1
Oregonian	1
San Diego Union Tribune	1
San Francisco Chronicle	1
Star-Ledger	1
Sun-Sentinel	1

USA Today	1
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The following 27 papers did not print any stories or opinion columns on the Green New Deal from Nov. 1 to Dec. 27:

- Arizona Republic
- Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
- Atlanta Journal-Constitution
- Cincinnati Enquirer
- Cleveland Plain Dealer
- Columbus Dispatch (one letter to the editor (LTE))
- Dallas Morning News
- East Bay Times (10 LTEs)
- Honolulu Star-Advertiser
- Houston Chronicle
- Indianapolis Star
- Kansas City Star
- Las Vegas Review-Journal
- Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
- New York Daily News
- New York Post
- Newsday
- Oklahoman
- Omaha World-Herald
- Orlando Sentinel
- Sacramento Bee
- St. Louis Post-Dispatch
- St. Paul Pioneer Press
- Star Tribune
- Tampa Bay Times
- Times-Picayune
- Virginian-Pilot

The numbers change modestly if one considers the full 2018 calendar year. By that measure, *The Washington Post* led with 5 pieces mentioning the Green New Deal, followed by *The Boston Globe* (four), *The New York Times* (four), and *The Wall Street Journal* (four, although one was critical). Table 2 has full data on the top 50 papers that mentioned the Green New Deal in 2018 overall.

Table 2. Number of print pieces mentioning the Green New Deal in U.S. newspapers that rank in the top 50 by circulation, 2018.

Newspaper	Pieces
Washington Post	5
Boston Globe	4
New York Times	4
Wall Street Journal	4
Los Angeles Times	3
Buffalo News	2
Chicago Sun-Times	2
Chicago Tribune	2
Detroit Free Press	2
Philadelphia Inquirer	2
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	2

Seattle Times	2
Baltimore Sun	1
Denver Post	1
Honolulu Star-Advertiser	1
Mercury News	1
Miami Herald	1
Orange County Register	1
Oregonian	1
San Diego Union Tribune	1
San Francisco Chronicle	1
Star-Ledger	1
Sun-Sentinel	1
USA Today	1

The following 26 papers did not print any stories or opinion columns on the Green New Deal in 2018:

- Arizona Republic
- Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
- Atlanta Journal-Constitution
- Cincinnati Enquirer
- Cleveland Plain Dealer
- Columbus Dispatch (one LTE)
- Dallas Morning News
- East Bay Times (10 LTEs)
- Houston Chronicle
- Indianapolis Star
- Kansas City Star
- Las Vegas Review-Journal
- Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
- New York Daily News
- New York Post
- Newsday
- Oklahoman
- Omaha World-Herald
- Orlando Sentinel
- Sacramento Bee
- St. Louis Post-Dispatch
- St. Paul Pioneer Press
- Star Tribune
- Tampa Bay Times
- Times-Picayune
- Virginian-Pilot

Digital media. Among digital sources from Nov. 1 to Dec. 27, *Politico* led with 33 pieces, followed by *The Daily Caller* and *The Washington Post* with 32 each. For full data, see Table 3. This analysis uses data from the [Media Cloud](#) project for “top” online U.S. news sources for 2017.

Table 3. Number of pieces mentioning the Green New Deal among 31 top digital media sources, Nov. 1 to Dec 27, 2018.

Digital Source	Pieces
Politico	33
Daily Caller	32

Washington Post*	32
Yahoo News	15
HuffPost	14
Atlantic	14
Guardian (U.S.)	9
Vox	9
Breitbart	8
Fox News	7
New Yorker	7
Wall Street Journal*	7
Buzzfeed	5
Forbes	5
NBC News	5
Bloomberg	4
Slate.com	4
USA Today*	4
Blaze	3
Business Insider	3
New York Times*	3
Time	3
CNN	2
NewsMax	2
CNBC	1
Daily News	1
Los Angeles Times*	1
Reuters	1
CBS News*	0
drudgereport	0
finance.yahoo.com	0

* These digital media published some content that appeared both online and in another format. When a newspaper printed a story and also posted it online, we counted it in both places because the two instances might have reached different audiences. Television networks sometimes post transcripts of their segments or news stories that consist of little more than quotes from a transcript. Sometimes they post both a transcript and one or more quote-heavy “stories” based on it. For television networks, we included in the “digital source” totals just one online post per television segment.

If one includes all of 2018, *The Daily Caller* led with 40 pieces, followed by *Politico* and *The Washington Post* with 35 each, and *HuffPost* with 28. Full data for 2018 is in Table 4.

Table 4. Number of pieces mentioning the Green New Deal among 31 top digital media sources, 2018.

Digital Source	Pieces
Daily Caller	40
Politico	35
Washington Post*	35
HuffPost	28
Yahoo News	21
Vox	17
Atlantic	15
Breitbart	13
Guardian (U.S.)	13
Forbes	10
Fox News	8
NBC News	8
New Yorker	8
Slate.com	7
Wall Street Journal*	7
Business Insider	6
Buzzfeed	5
CNN	5
New York Times*	5
Blaze	4
Bloomberg	4
USA Today*	4
CBS News*	3
Time	3
NewsMax	2
CNBC	1
Daily News	1
Los Angeles Times*	1
Reuters	1
drudgereport	0
finance.yahoo.com	0

* These digital media published some content that appeared both online and in another format. When a newspaper printed a story and also posted it online, we counted it in both places because the two instances might have reached different audiences. Television networks sometimes post transcripts of their segments or news stories that consist of little more than quotes from a transcript. Sometimes they post both a transcript and one or more quote-heavy “stories” based on it. For television networks, we included in the “digital source” totals just one online post per television segment.

Conclusion

In light of so many media outlets' failure to give the Green New Deal and the Select Committee proposal the attention they merited, it is clear that advocates were fighting on a tilted playing field. If media coverage had been better, the effort to create the Select Committee may have been more successful.

Proponents of a Green New Deal, or solving the climate crisis by other means, certainly are not giving up. Media outlets will have plenty of chances to do better going forward, and they should resolve to do so. The climate crisis is far too urgent and severe to ignore. Editors and producers should make it a high priority to provide strong, thorough, and accurate coverage of not just the harms of climate change, both current and projected, but also proposed solutions.