

It's hard to keep track of the twenty or so Democrats who are in the running for the 2020 presidential nomination. The differences between them on climate policy are minor compared with the gulf between them and President Trump. All of them support the Paris Agreement, unlike Trump. And all of them vow to restore Obama's climate change regulations. But it's worth taking a look at some of the nuances, for whatever clues they may give us about what the eventual nominee might look like. And the differences are also significant to the extent they reflect the range of views and priorities among Democratic voters.

In surveying the candidates' views, I was able to build on recent material in the [Axios](#) blog and the [NY Times](#), which spared me the tedious task of ferreting out the views of each candidate myself. Here are some key takeaways about their views:

**Support for the Green New Deal is broad but shallow.** According to Axios, among the six candidates who co-sponsored the Green New Deal in Congress, three described it as aspirational or as setting goals rather than firm policies (Gillebrand, Klobuchar, and Harris). Three others were more fervent (Sanders, Warren, and Booker). Among the other candidates, Williamson, O'Rourke, Castro, and Yang have endorsed the Green New Deal, while Delaney and Inslee were only willing to endorse its "spirit." As far as I can tell, no one has said that its environmental, jobs, and equality efforts are the cornerstone of their domestic policy, something that the Green New Deal aspires to.

**There's a split on carbon taxation.** According to the *Times*, about a third of the candidates support a carbon tax (Booker, Buttigieg, Castro, Delaney, Gillibrand, Williamson, and Yang). Another five (Inslee, Klobuchar, O'Rourke, Ryan, Swalwell) said they are willing to consider a carbon tax. The fact that about two-thirds of the candidates were willing to at least consider a carbon tax may show that it's not seen as quite such political poison as the conventional wisdom would have it.

**There's another split on nuclear power.** Most were apparently opposed to new nuclear plants, but six were in favor (Booker, Delaney, Hickenlooper, Inslee, Klobuchar, Ryan, Yang). Three others (Swalwell, Castro, and Williamson) said they might be willing to consider nuclear despite reservations. Most of the others skipped the question. Energy experts and environmentalists are also somewhat divided on this issue, so it's not surprising that there was no clear consensus among the candidates.

**Candidates were divided on the need for new regulations.** On the "yes" side were Castro, Gabbard, Gillibrand, Hickenlooper, Inslee, O'Rourke, Sanders, Warren, and Williamson. Messam, Ryan, Swalwell, and Yang were willing to consider the possibility of

new regulations.

Everyone loves research funding. Literally “everyone,” among this group. Several singled out battery and storage technology as an area of special need.

**What about Biden?** Biden wasn’t included in the surveys. However, he has a long history of working on climate issues. His [involvement](#) stretches back to 1986, when he introduced the first Senate bill aimed at climate change, and he also emphasized climate issues when he was Vice President under Obama. Up till now, as [Vox](#) has observed, he has presented himself in the current electoral cycle as a generic Democrat on the issue, without taking a really distinctive stance.

**So where does the Democratic Party stand on climate change?** There is clearly consensus that we need to address the issue of climate change and that Obama’s policies provide a good foundation. There also seems to be agreement that something stronger is needed beyond those policies. But, to the extent that the candidates represent the spectrum of views among Democrats, there is not yet a clear agreement on what needs to be done, or how quickly, or at what cost. There is a political price for taking more specific positions, which could drive away some voters, but candidates are also under some pressure to distinguish themselves from the pack. That tension is likely to shape how their policy positions evolve over the next year.