

# Opinion

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## Sanders' climate plan: mostly wrong

This editorial originally appeared in *The Washington Post*.

Sen. Bernie Sanders released a climate plan last week. In his characteristic style, he excited a class of left-wing ideologues — and elicited eye rolls from everyone else.

The proposal calls for \$16.3 trillion in new spending over a decade to eliminate the use of fossil fuels in electricity production and transportation by 2030 — nearly 10 times the amount former vice president and fellow Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden has proposed spending. By 2050, the

carbon-free electricity: nuclear power. Not only would he halt the building of new plants; he also would deny re-licensing to the existing ones that now provide about 20 percent of the nation's electricity.

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country would no longer produce net greenhouse gas emissions. At least this latter goal is right. So much else in the plan is wrongheaded.

Sanders, I-Vt., would spend more than \$2 trillion to build new wind, solar and geothermal electricity-production infrastructure through government-run utilities. He would spend another \$2 trillion buying people electric cars. Though he proposes totally electrifying car and truck transportation, he also wants to spend \$607 billion linking U.S. cities with high-speed rail, which, under his plan, would represent a major cost for meager carbon benefits.

Sanders insists that his plan would be paid for through new taxes levied against fossil-fuel companies, cuts in military spending and new income tax revenue from the jobs he claims his plan would create. The senator promises 20 million "good-paying, unionized jobs." Only about 6.1 million people are unemployed in the United States. Though some currently employed Americans could try to trade up to the cushy gigs envisioned by Sanders, many of them would not have the skills required to weatherize homes or install solar panels.

Sanders also promises to make his plan unnecessarily expensive by ruling out a long-established source of

On climate policy, the key is to get the most bang for the nation's buck. The task is so large that direct government spending on projects such as power plants is a recipe for unconscionable waste. Sanders's promise to divert national wealth into proven boondoggles such as high-speed rail is another red flag.

No central planner can know exactly how and where to invest for an efficient and effective energy transition. That is why economists continue to recommend that the government take a simple, two-pronged approach: invest in scientific research and prime the market to accept new, clean technologies with a substantial and steadily rising carbon tax. People and businesses would find the most effective ways to avoid the increasingly high, tax-inflated costs of using dirty fuels. Maybe that would mean building huge new solar farms throughout the country. Maybe it would mean massive energy efficiency gains driven by home retrofits or new appliances. Maybe it would mean continuing to accept some role for nuclear power.

We do not know, precisely, what the most efficient path looks like. We are also certain that Sanders does not.



## US shouldn't sponsor Russian bid to rejoin G7

By Tom Crouser

**P**RESIDENT TRUMP said the Russian Federation should rejoin the G7. Nope. Here's why.

The G7 group was first formed as the Group of Six (G6) after the Arab oil embargo (1974), and included: France, West Germany, the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom and Italy. Canada was added the next year and they became the Group of Seven (G7). Their purpose morphed into coordinating the large industrial nation's reactions to global issues after the embargo faded.

In 1997, Russia joined even though they were only the 14th largest economy at the time. Economies such as Brazil, India, Australia, and South Korea were larger. Fast forward to 2014 and the Russians invaded eastern Ukraine and further annexed their Crimean region, which had a population of 2.4 million (vs. 1.85 million in West Virginia), situated in an area half the size our land mass (10,425 square miles versus our 24,087).

Because of the invasion, Russia was suspended from the G8 (2014), and then they permanently withdrew in 2017. Now, back to 1999, the Group of Twenty (G20) was formed consisting of 19 countries and the European Union, including all the original G7 plus Russia. In 2009, they announced they would replace the G7 as the main economic council. But the G7 retained its relevance as a "steering group for the West."

Around the time of Russia's 2014 suspension with the focus of Crimea, Vladimir Putin claimed Crimea has always belonged to Russia, and he does have something of an argument there. Catherine the Great first annexed Crimea in 1783. Then the Russians lost it to the French, British and Ottoman Empire among others, in the Crimean War (1853-1856).

More recently (1921), Crimea joined the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, first as part of Russia and then was transferred to Ukraine by the Soviets (1954). Putin argues Russia did not give up Crimea, rather the Soviets confiscated it. In 2014, after Russia sent unmarked troops into Crimea, a popular vote was taken resulting in public approval to rejoin Russia. Of course, no international monitors were allowed, except Russian ones. Although most see the vote as a sham, Russians see it as Crimea regaining its rightful place.

James Dobbins of the RAND Corporation disagrees. Dobbins was U.S. Ambassador to the European Union under George H. W. Bush, had a stint as Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs in 2001 under George W. Bush and was Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan for two years under Barack Obama.

Dobbins says the decision to admit Russia was clearly aspirational and, for a while, held promise. But reforms didn't work.

Besides, Russia is not one of the world's largest economies. India and Brazil are larger and are market democracies, where Russia depends on crony capitalism.

Finally, if raw power and influence were the criteria, then China should be next. If democracy and an open economy are the measures, then India should join.

Besides, there is credible evidence of Russian interference in our 2016 election. And according to the National Security Strategy assessment signed by President Trump in 2017, "Russia aims to weaken U.S. influence in the world and divide us from our allies and partners. Russia views the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European Union (EU) as threats. Russia is investing in new military capabilities, including nuclear systems that remain the most significant existential threat to the United States, and in destabilizing cyber capabilities ... Russia interferes in the domestic political affairs of countries around the world. The combination of Russian ambition and growing military capabilities creates an unstable frontier in Eurasia, where the risk of conflict due to Russian miscalculation is growing."

Should the Russia be added to the G7 ahead of Brazil, India, Australia, or South Korea? No. After all, Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin didn't invite Nazi Germany to their World War II summits. So, why is President Trump promoting Russia even after he signed the National Security Strategy assessment showing them as our adversary? No one knows. Perhaps we will one day.

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### HOW TO WRITE US

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## Happy 101st birthday, Katherine Johnson

By Aziz Inan

West Virginia native and West Virginia State University graduate Katherine Johnson turned 101 on Monday.

As a mathematician, Johnson's calculations of orbital mechanics as a NASA employee were critical to the success of the first and subsequent U.S. crewed spaceflights.

As a kid, Johnson loved mathematics and counting. "I counted everything," she said in a profile published by NASA, "I counted the steps to the road, the steps up to church, the number of dishes and silverware I washed ... anything that could be counted, I did."

During her 35-year career at NASA and its predecessor, the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, she earned a reputation for mastering complex manual calculations and helped pioneer the use of computers to perform the tasks. The space agency noted her "historical role as one of the first African-American women to work as a NASA scientist."

Johnson's work included calculating trajectories, launch windows and emergency return paths for Project Mercury spaceflights, including those for astronauts Alan Shepard, the first American in space, and John Glenn, the first Amer-

ican in orbit; and rendezvous paths for the Apollo lunar module and command module on flights to the Moon. Her calculations were also essential to the beginning of the space shuttle program, and she worked on plans for a mission to Mars.

In 2015, President Barack Obama awarded Johnson the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Additionally, Johnson was portrayed by Taraji P. Henson as a lead character in the 2016 film, "Hidden Figures."

Johnson is a living legend and role model in terms of influencing students to seek STEM education. She often speaks to students about her own extraordinary career and encourages all of them to pursue STEM careers. Johnson tells them, "We will always have STEM with us. Some things will drop out of the public eye and will go away, but there will always be science, engineering and technology. And there will always, always be mathematics. Everything is physics and math."

Johnson's love for mathematics and numbers served as an inspiration for me to construct the following number curiosities as a birthday gift in her honor:

1. If Johnson's 101st birthday, 8/26/2019, is split as 8, 26, and 2019, note that 101 is the 26th prime number; the digits of 26 add up to 8, and the sum of the prime factors of 2019, namely 3 and 673, equals 26 square.

2. Further, 3 and 673 are the second

and 122nd prime numbers, the sum of 2 and 122 equals twice 62, and 62 is the reverse of 26.

3. Johnson's birthday always coincides with the 238th day of a non-leap year and interestingly, the prime factors of 238, namely 2, 7, and 17, add up to 26.

4. Also, twice the sum of the digits of 238 equals 26.

5. Furthermore, the reverse of 238, namely 832, equals 26 times the difference of the squares of the digits of 26.

6. Johnson's birthday coincides with the 239th day of each leap year and interestingly, 239 is the 52nd prime number and 52 is twice 26.

7. The sum of the squares of the digits of Johnson's birth date expressed as 8/26 equals 26 times the difference of the digits of 26.

8. Johnson's 104th birthday in 2022 will be special since 104 is twice 8 times 26 (her birth date, 8/26).

9. Also, 2022 divided by the sum of its digits, namely 6, equals 337, the 68th prime number; and interestingly, 68 is twice the sum of 8 and 26.

10. Lastly, the sum of the digits of Johnson's 101st birthday expressed as 8/26/19 yields 26.

I wish you a happy 101st birthday, Katherine Johnson. Thank you for all your contributions to our world.

Aziz Inan is chairman of and a professor teaching in the electrical engineering program of the Donald P. Shiley School of Engineering at the University of Portland in Oregon.