

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

More protesters storm Pelosi's office demanding climate change action

BY MIRANDA GREEN AND TIMOTHY CAMA - 12/10/18 1:13 PM ET

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The activists with the Sunrise movement, a group that's pushing House Democrats to create a special committee next year focused entirely on climate change initiatives, engaged in three sit-ins inside the offices of the likely next Speaker, Rep. [Nancy Pelosi](#) (D-Calif), as well as incoming Majority Leader [Steny Hoyer](#) (D-Md.) and Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Mass.), who is in line to chair the House Rules Committee.

Most of the protesters, who ranged in age from their teens to their late 20s, were eventually pushed out by Capitol Police after threat of arrest.

Officers did arrest 138 protesters on charges of blocking hallways, Capitol Police said.

The protests are the second wave organized by the Sunrise Movement to disrupt the Capitol since the midterm elections. Protesters in early November organized a sit-in inside Pelosi's office in conjunction with Rep.-elect [Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez](#) (D-N.Y), who is leading the organization's call for the creation of a climate change committee and for a "Green New Deal." Fifty-one protesters were arrested at the time.

Since the first protest, around two dozen members of Congress have come on board with the idea of establishing a select House committee that would focus on ways to bring 100 percent renewable energy to the United States. Protesters Monday are looking for more Democrats to come on board before they take control of the House in 2019.

"We are here to call on Democratic politicians, that we know are with us, who understand the climate science, to back up their words with action and support this select committee for a Green New Deal, said Varshini Prakash, founder and communications director of the movement.

She called the committee "the best solution on the table right now that will actually work to avert crisis."

The group's protests follow a slew of recent scientific reports that warn immediate action is necessary to stop the irreversible impacts of climate change.

Hoyer on Monday tweeted support for the protesters, calling climate change "one of the most pressing issues of our time."

"Speaking out is exactly what our democracy is all about, and I appreciate their passion. The new Dem Majority will #ActonClimate," he tweeted, without officially backing the Green

He told the crowd he supports the idea of forming a House select committee on the Green New Deal. "The answer is yes," he said.

McGovern's endorsement is key, because the Rules Committee will have to approve any proposal for a select committee before the full House does. He said he hopes to create the committee on Jan. 3, the day the House is sworn in and the day Democrats will vote on the rules to govern the next two years for the chamber.

McGovern went on to say that he wants to ensure that existing committees still have authority to review whatever legislation comes out of the new panel.

"We have some really good members of Congress who are on the Energy and Commerce Committee, and who are on Ways and Means, which would do the stuff. They're committed to this stuff as well. I think the controversy comes down to when you're going to say, 'we're going to take away their jurisdiction.' We're not saying that at all," he said.

"We're saying this select committee, you know, will come up with ideas, but it will go through the committees of jurisdiction."

McGovern later clarified to The Hill that while he supports forming a House select committee, he still wants to see details hammered out on what protesters are specifically calling for in terms of their plan.

"As I pointed out to them, their special select committee is evolving, it's changing. So I support a special select committee. But we need to work out the details, and I think we will, and it will be something that, you know, I think will help elevate this issue and focus attention on solutions," McGovern said.

A spokeswoman for Pelosi said she's committed to working with the Democratic caucus to agree to a way forward.

"Addressing climate change remains a top priority for Speaker-designate Pelosi. She has proposed reinstating a select committee on climate and looks forward to caucus-wide discussions with the committees of jurisdiction to determine the appropriate path forward," said spokeswoman Taylor Griffin.

Ocasio-Cortez's office did not return a request for comment.

Rep. Raúl Grijalva (D-Ariz.), the likely next chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, has said he supports the creation of the panel but does not believe it should have the authority to draft legislation.

Supporters of the Green New Deal are not pushing any explicit bills but instead hope the creation of the committee will put climate change issues front and center. They hope Congress will address ways to transition the country out of its fossil fuel reliance while creating millions of new renewable energy related jobs.

Their focus is as much about making climate change a central voting bloc issue in 2020 as it is passing legislation in the next Congress.

“We hope that before congress leaves for recess in a few days many will come to support this and cement the Green New Deal in the agenda for 2019 and 2020,” said Prakash.

“Today we are here to say to Democratic politicians in general that the time is enough, no more excuses. We need them to take action at the actual scale and scope of the crisis at hand.”

—Updated at 3:28 p.m.

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