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### Biden's Environmental Policies –The First Fifty Days, The Cons and The Future

One of the reasons people voted Joe Biden into the presidency is that he advocates for the environment. Those who are conscious of the needs of the environment, which weren't being met or even acknowledged by the prior administration, are now optimistic about what's to come. We already see many of the new administration's environmental policies coming to light. For example, the Keystone XL pipeline's construction permit was revoked to combat climate change in an effort to get away from fossil fuels. Subsequently, Cash for Clunkers, an unsuccessful program from the Obama administration, is being revamped to get more electric cars on the road.

These and many other new environmental policy changes have been controversial and criticized. Is the loss of jobs that comes with the shutdown of pipeline construction worth it? Is cash for clunkers not going to work again this time? Are the goals attached to the new environmental policy unrealistic, or is it too little too late? In the following pages, I will examine Biden's overall plan for the environment. This paper will provide a comprehensive overview and give the details of Biden's plan, the controversies attached, and what experts are saying.

### **Accomplishments in Bidens First 50 Days**

Biden's environmental plan is ambitious and immense. He must undo over 100 environmental policy rollbacks of the Trump administration and repair the climate's rapidly and ongoing deteriorating state. Consequently, President Joe Biden came in like a wrecking ball in his first fifty days in office. He immediately completed two promises from his campaign: The U.S. has rejoined the Paris climate accord, and he revoked the permit for the Keystone XL oil pipeline. Furthermore, he stopped development on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and stopped new oil and gas leases on federal lands and offshore waters to start reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

President Biden has begun working on other promises that include (Table 1):

- Making investments in infrastructure to ensure that it can withstand the effect of climate change with the \$2 trillion "Build Back Better" plan for infrastructure improvements.
- Curbing hydrofluorocarbons (a greenhouse gas) by ratifying the [Kigali Amendment](#).
- Conserving 30% of the U.S. lands and waters by 2030, starting with the most ecologically significant, by restoring national monuments' boundaries shrunk by the Trump administration.
- Gathering world leaders of twenty countries that produce 81% of the world's greenhouse gases in the U.S. for a climate summit on April 22-23, 2021

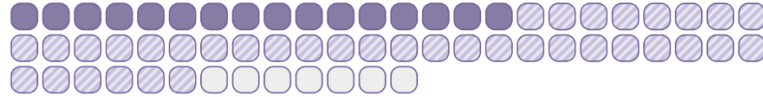
### Day 52: Tracking Biden's 100-day promises

AP journalists track actions President Joe Biden said he would take in his first 100 days.

Completed In progress Not started



16 promises kept of 61 promises



#### CLIMATE 2 / 7 promises kept



Table 1 PBS News

Biden created the First National Climate Task Force to assist with his climate plan goals. Their first meeting took place on February 11th, 2021. The task force consists of twenty-one federal agencies and Senior White House officials with a mindset of a “whole-of-government approach to tackling climate change, creating good-paying, union jobs, and achieving environmental justice” (White House). So far, we are off to a promising start.

### **Cons and Controversy**

However, while there's been significant progress in Bidens first 50 days, Biden has a long way to go. Climate experts have described Biden's plan as the "most far-reaching climate policy agenda of any president in history" (Kroll). These policies not only address climate change and the environment but are also geared towards creating jobs and benefiting disadvantaged communities. They include other ambitious goals like cleaning up the power sector by 2035 and transitioning valuable skills from coal jobs to renewable energy jobs.

Biden's plan does not stand without opposition. The coal industry, the oil industry, Trump-appointed conservative Judges, and the Republican majority senate and states are likely to stand in the way. The process of passing regulations takes years and requires "scientific analysis and public commentary." Hence "Even after that, Biden's environmental rules are likely to be challenged by lawsuits, potentially reaching the Supreme Court and adding years to the process. Future administrations could also undo those rules, just as the Trump administration did" (Sommer).

We've already seen the blowback after the XL Pipeline was shut down. Many displaced workers are complaining about losing their livelihood and surrounding small businesses shutting down. This, coupled with the financial stress of the pandemic, posits the contentious argument that we need to make sacrifices now for the future of our world. In turn, the oil industry is in climate denial anyway and uses the loss of jobs as leverage in the media. Then, "The American Petroleum Institute, the nation's largest oil and gas lobbying group," has attacked the "directive to pause new oil and gas leasing on federal

lands and offshore waters. The industry not only launched a nationwide PR campaign decrying the new leasing pause but also filed a lawsuit challenging it” (Sokol).

The XL Pipeline’s shutdown has inspired indigenous peoples and environmentalists to advocate for other pipeline shutdowns. Recently a protest of the Canadian company Enbridge’s Line 3 pipeline has ensued in Minnesota. As seen in this [video](#), indigenous activists camp where the pipeline is planned to pass through off the frozen Mississippi River. The video states that although the protest is in opposition to fossil fuels, there’s a supply and demand problem; basically, the U.S. is addicted to fossil fuels.

If you watch the news, lately, there’s a lot of reporting, and people are complaining about how gas prices have significantly risen since Biden came into office. It seems we want it both ways, and that’s not possible. It’s a matter of either making the sacrifices now or not having a viable climate tomorrow.

### **Future Climate Policy**

Fortunately, there is a sliver of rainbow visible through all the pollution. There are grassroots incentives like the plans to bring back the Obama era “Cash for Clunkers” and 1985’s “Conservation Reserve Program.” Then there are business leaders pledging to meet new standards in line with Biden’s big climate goals.

Cash for Clunkers pays people to scrap old cars. Then gives them around \$9000 towards an electric vehicle. However, there is much debate over if the plan would work since it didn’t work back when it was first implemented during the Obama administration. It could work if the focus is on the cars which pollute the most. Yet, tax

incentives for EV's haven't worked in the past. Also, much infrastructure is needed to convince people to get into and EVs, which generally are targeted towards a wealthier buyer.

A program by the Department of agriculture that is gaining traction in the Biden era is "The Conservation Reserve Program...established in 1985 to combat soil erosion and allows farmers to apply for funding in exchange for taking their land out of crop production and planting organisms that improve soil and air quality instead" (Marquez). Enrollment was down last year due to skepticism by farmers. The idea is that taking farmland out of the U.S. will only give rise to the opportunity for crops to be grown outside the U.S. hence putting small farms out of business. But with some tweaks, the program could help "mitigate the effects of climate change."

Business leaders realize that Bidens is serious about environmental regulations, so they are beginning to make changes in a somewhat self-regulatory manner to get ahead of the new climate change goals.

"The transition to clean energy will mean millions of new, good-paying jobs in communities across America, and the companies that embrace that transition will be better prepared to compete in the coming years and decades," said Jamal Raad, cofounder and executive director of climate change advocacy group Evergreen Action. "The Biden climate agenda will supercharge that transition, and the business community should be ready to pounce on the opportunities that this climate focus will deliver.

In short, if a company is willing to agree to the climate agenda, the Biden administration will do all it can to ensure that it makes money” (Goodkind).

Businesses never want to be over-regulated. They don't want to fall behind and lose money, so they are taking the initiative. Amazon, Salesforce, and Ford Motor Company signed a letter to support Biden's climate goals. Delta Air Lines, BP, Microsoft, Coca-Cola, Nike, and Walmart have pledged to go carbon neutral or reduce carbon dioxide currently in the atmosphere. And about a quarter of Fortune 500 companies “have made commitments to carbon neutrality, 100% renewable power, or other science-based targets by 2030. Those companies, which have a combined revenue of \$8 trillion and employ 18 million people, represent a fourfold increase over the past four years” (Goodkind).

We have a long, arduous road ahead in the fight to combat climate change. There will be a learning curve for everyone with many sacrifices to be made. There hasn't been a better time than with Biden in office as an advocate for the earth. His first 50 days prove to be an admirable head start, but we will all need to be dedicated and contribute to make it work.

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