



In light of President Biden’s withdrawal from the 2024 presidential race yesterday, we thought it was appropriate to update this piece about the climate legacy of the Biden-Harris Administration.

In his four years in office, Donald Trump rolled back essentially every existing federal policy to limit climate change. The picture under the Biden Administration has been a dramatic reversal, enacting lots of environmental protections and starting to spend tens of billions of dollars. By [one count](#), Biden has overturned more than two dozen of Trump actions affecting the fossil fuel industry.

And we could see yet another [U-turn](#) in climate policy after the November election. Trump recently told Big Oil executives over dinner that they should give him \$1 billion in campaign donations because he planned to immediately reverse climate regulations, the [New York Times](#) and [Washington Post](#) both reported.

This post from UC Berkeley and UCLA Law puts together the pieces by listing 35

consequential Biden actions, by date and subject matter. The earliest action covered is Biden's rejoining the Paris Agreement. More recently, there was a burst of final actions taken around Earth Day 2024, and we are now seeing a surge of spending under the Inflation Reduction Act.

International

January 20, 2021. U.S. begins the process of rejoining the Paris Agreement on Biden's first day in office. The U.S. [officially became a party](#) to the agreement again on February 19, 2021.

January 27, 2021. Biden [issues](#) an "Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad." That order created the new presidentially appointed Special Presidential Envoy for Climate and announced several high-level climate summits.

April 22, 2021. Biden [sets target](#) of at least 50% reduction in carbon emissions below 2005 levels by 2030.

October 26, 2022. Biden signs the formal U.S. ratification of the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, an international treaty to regulate super-warming chemicals.

Cross-Sector Actions

January 20, 2021. Biden [issues](#) "Executive Order 13990, "Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis."

August 9, 2022. Biden signs bipartisan CHIPS Act, which provides \$54 billion in funding for climate-related research and development. The act looks to boost the domestic semiconductor industry through billions of dollars in announcements for new factories and expansions of US manufacturing.

August 16, 2022. [Biden signs Inflation Reduction Act](#), which provides at least \$369 billion in funding for clean energy and climate, leading many to hail the law as "the largest investment in clean energy and climate action ever."

November 22, 2022. Labor Department issues rule to ensure that pension plans can consider climate risks when making investment decisions.

April 21, 2023. Biden [issues](#) “Executive Order on Revitalizing Our Nation’s Commitment to Environmental Justice for All.” The order establishes an Office of Environmental Justice within the White House to coordinate efforts across all departments and agencies.

Dec. 2, 2023. EPA [announces](#) new \$190 estimate of social cost of carbon (the harm done by one ton of CO₂), compared with \$7 under the Trump Administration.

March 6, 2024. SEC [adopts](#) climate disclosure rules for corporations. (A federal court then [temporarily halts the rules](#), and the SEC postpones their effective date).

March 28, 2024. Biden and Interior Department [restore](#) a series of protections for imperiled animals and plants that had been loosened under Trump. It returns protections for animals that are classified as “threatened” with extinction, one step short of “endangered.” It also ensures that climate change can be considered as a basis for listing.

April 4, 2024. Biden and the EPA [select the recipients](#) for \$20 billion in grant awards under two competitions within the \$27 billion Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund created under the IRA.

April 22, 2024. Biden officially [launches](#) the American Climate Corps, a program that will put thousands of young people to work fighting the climate crisis. That included a partnership with North America’s Building Trades Unions to train workers for the growing number of union jobs in clean energy.

June 16, 2024. Biden announces new rules to incentivize clean energy projects paying union-scale wages, emphasizing the link between climate policy and rebuilding the working class.

July 21, 2024. Administration [awards](#) \$4.3 billion in grants for community-based projects designed to reduce carbon emissions.

Transportation Emissions

November 15, 2021. Biden signs bipartisan Infrastructure Act, which devotes over \$100 billion for rail, mass transit, charging stations, and zero-emission ferries and buses.

April 6, 2022. EPA restores California’s Clean Car preemption waiver, which had been rescinded by the Trump Administration.

March 31, 2023. EPA grants preemption waiver for California Clean Truck Rule.

March 20, 2024. EPA adopts emissions rules for cars that will cut CO2 emissions in half by 2032, avoiding more than seven billion tons of carbon dioxide emission over three decades. The *New York Times* [reports](#) the rule would “eliminate more greenhouse gas emissions than any other climate rule in the nation’s history.”

March 29, 2024. EPA issues carbon emissions limits for heavy trucks, which it estimates will prevent 1 billion tons of CO2 emissions.

May 29, 2024. EPA [funds](#) 3400 electric school buses.

June 11, 2024. Biden [releases](#) \$1.7 billion for electric vehicle manufacturing.

June 21, 2024. EPA [releases](#) new biofuels standard.

Energy Sector Emissions

May 11, 2021. Biden Administration approves first U.S. offshore wind project.

December 2, 2023. EPA issues final rule on methane emissions from the oil and gas industry, which will prevent the equivalent of 1.5 billion tons of CO2 emissions.

March 27, 2024. Biden Administration issues a rule limiting venting and flaring from oil and gas operations on federal lands.

April 12, 2024. Biden and the Interior Department [raise](#) the royalty rates that fossil fuel companies pay the government in order to drill and mine on public lands, the first time since 1920 that those fees have increased.

April 19, 2024. Biden and the Interior Department [publish](#) a final rule protecting 13 million acres of Alaska from oil drilling. The rule seeks to maximize protections in the western Arctic—some of the most ecologically valuable land in the country.

April 22, 2024. Biden and the EPA [award](#) \$7 billion toward “solar power for all” from the IRA’s Solar for All program—which will deliver residential and community solar in disadvantaged communities. That \$7 billion in funding is expected to deliver residential solar projects for 60 state and local governments, tribes, and nonprofits.

April 22, 2024. Biden and the Energy Department finalize [a grid transmission rule](#) that aims to cut review time in half—helping address one of the largest barriers to a clean grid. The announcement includes \$331 million to fund more than 2,000 MW of additional grid capacity.

April 24, 2024. Biden and the Interior Department [announce](#) a new five-year offshore wind leasing schedule, which includes up to 12 potential offshore wind energy lease sales through 2028 across the Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, Pacific, and the waters offshore the U.S. territories.

April 25, 2024. Biden and the EPA [finalize](#) national standards on carbon pollution from the power sector, as well as three other important rules for power plants. Under these standards, most coal and new gas plants will be required to cut their carbon pollution by 90%. EPA's greenhouse gas emission standards will avoid 1.38 billion metric tons of carbon pollution through 2047, equivalent to the annual emissions of 328 million gas cars. Another rule tightens the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards, cleans up wastewater, and better manages coal ash.

April 30, 2024. Biden and the White House Council on Environmental Quality [finalized a rule to “reform, simplify, and modernize”](#) the federal environmental review process under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). [The rule](#) basically implements new permitting efficiencies that were included in the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023.

April 30, 2024. Biden and the Energy Department [finalize](#) stricter energy-efficiency standards for a range of residential water heaters with the goal of cutting energy waste from all sorts of appliances and carbon pollution. The administration estimates the new standards [will save](#) households and businesses nearly \$1 trillion over 30 years, and save the average family \$100 a year or more through lower utility bills.

July 9, 2024. Biden signs the bipartisan ADVANCE Act, which among other things will support advanced nuclear technologies and continued operation of existing nuclear plant.

We probably won't see any major regulatory actions in the remaining months of Biden's term because of the risk that a new Congress could countermand them. We can expect, however, to see a lot of spending going out the door in order to avoid the risk that Trump will go after clean energy spending. And Biden will undoubtedly try to push climate policy forward at the next U.N. negotiating session, which will take place in Baku just after Election Day.

