

Obama moved us forward. Trump moved us backwards. Are we back where we began? No. Biden starts from a significantly stronger position than Obama did in 2008.

In 2008, like today, the outgoing Republican President had adamantly opposed climate action, favored the oil and gas industry, and turned a cold shoulder toward environmental regulation. Trump tried to wipe away all the progress that Obama made since 2008. Nevertheless, Biden starts out with some big advantages that Obama lacked in 2008.

To begin with, Trump didn't really undo *everything* of Obama's. Trump left intact the Obama EPA's official finding that greenhouse gases endanger human health and welfare. That's the trigger for regulating GHGs under the Clean Air Act. The Obama EPA adopted a timed decrease in emissions from new cars. Trump sharply slowed the second half of the decrease, but didn't undo the standards that had already gone into effect. Obama also required greenhouse gas emissions to be considered in permitting for new pollution sources. That requirement is still intact. Trump also refused to make Obama's air pollution standards for ozone and particulates stricter, but Obama's standards remain in effect.

Although Trump rolled back a slew of other Obama era regulations, Biden won't be starting from scratch after rescinding those rollbacks. Obama and then Trump assembled reams of information that the Biden Administration can use to justify tighter standards. There's also been a lot of scientific research even in the last four years to support vigorous environmental regulation, and the science is certainly much stronger than it was when Obama took office in 2008.

The situation facing Biden is more advantageous in other ways as well. Renewable energy has made tremendous progress since 2008. In the meantime, use of coal, the most environmentally destructive power source, has declined dramatically. The car industry is turning toward electric vehicles as battery storage becomes ever cheaper. Many state governments have dramatically ramped up climate change or renewable energy targets.

Internationally, rather than being the poster child for runaway emissions growth, China has ambitious plans to reduce emissions. Trump took the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement temporarily, but other countries have remained firmly attached to the agreement that Obama did so much to help create.

Don't get me wrong. The past four years have been a disaster. During a time when it could have been striding ahead, the U.S. government was backpedaling as fast as it could. Meanwhile, the clock is ticking as climate action becomes increasingly urgent. Despite all that, Biden can do much more than merely repair the damage. We're not back in 2008 by

means, and Biden starts from a better place than Obama did. Correspondingly, he should be able to do even more than Obama.