

House Democrats Release Climate Action Plan

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On June 30, 2020, Democratic members of the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis unveiled a 538-page report that calls for reaching net-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions economy-wide by 2050. The [report](#), titled “Solving the Climate Crisis: The Congressional Action Plan for a Clean Energy Economy and a Healthy and Just America,” includes over a hundred policy recommendations to meet the 2050 goal.

Most of the recommendations are unlikely to be implemented because they do not have bipartisan support. Nevertheless, the report serves as a messaging tool for Democrats around the party’s stance on climate change and provides insight on some of the top climate-related policies that Democrats may pursue if they gain control of all levers of the federal government. Below is a high-level overview of select notable policy recommendations included in the report.

- Decarbonize the Electricity Sector – The report calls for achieving net-zero emissions in the electricity sector by 2040, through the enactment of a federal clean energy standard. It states that a national clean energy standard should allow the use of any zero-emission technology, including wind, solar, energy, storage, nuclear, hydropower, and carbon capture use and storage. To incentivize the development of clean power, the report calls for extending, expanding, or creating new tax credits.
- Reduce Transportation GHG Emissions – The report calls upon Congress to direct EPA to use existing authority under the Clean Air Act to set more stringent GHG emission standards for passenger cars and light-duty trucks beginning in 2026. The report calls for new standards to require at least a 6% reduction annually in emissions relative to 2020 levels. It also calls for the establishment of a national zero-emission vehicle sales standard so that all new light-duty vehicles sold in the country are zero-emission by 2035.
- Lower GHG Emissions from Manufacturing – The report recommends that Congress enact performance standards and border adjustment mechanisms to enable industrial facilities to reduce emissions while manufacturing goods at rates competitive with “dirtier imports.”
- Develop a Carbon Pricing Scheme – The report supports carbon pricing but refrains from proposing how such a program would work. Instead, the report states that carbon pricing is not a “silver bullet” and should be used to complement other GHG-reducing policies. The report explicitly disfavors carbon pricing that would impose a moratorium on GHG regulation

by EPA.

- Lower GHG Pollution from Public Lands – The report suggests establishing a national goal to achieve net-zero emissions on public lands and waters by 2040. To achieve this goal, the report recommends that Congress direct the Department of Interior (DOI), in consultation with other agencies, to develop a comprehensive public lands climate plan. Additionally, the report encourages Congress to enact a moratorium on new fossil fuel leases on federal lands until DOI issues the climate plan and determines that additional leasing will not interfere with achieving net-zero emissions on public lands by 2040.
- Shift Private Capital Toward Green Investments – To spur private investment in clean technology and resilient infrastructure, the report recommends enacting legislation to require public companies to disclose climate-related risks in financial disclosures to the Securities Exchange Commission.
- Minimize Methane Pollution from Oil and Gas Production – The report supports reinstating Obama-era new source performance standards for the oil and gas sector, which set limits on methane emissions. The report also proposes establishing national methane emission reduction goals through federal legislation. Specifically, the report calls for legislation that requires the oil and gas sector to reduce methane emissions 65% to 70% by 2025, and 90% by 2030, compared to 2012 levels.

The Climate Action Plan is consistent with Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden's actions indicating that climate change will be a major component of his campaign. In May, Biden worked with former rival Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) to develop a joint climate task force comprised of surrogates from both camps. The Biden-Sanders task force released its final recommendations on July 8, 2020. The task force calls for achieving net-zero GHG emissions economy-wide by 2050, and decarbonizing the electricity sector by 2035 – five years sooner than the House select committee's report. The task force also outlines broad strategies to reduce GHG emissions associated with transportation, manufacturing, and agriculture. However, the majority of these recommendations lack specific deadlines or policy details. For instance, the task force states that the U.S. must quickly reestablish "strong standards for clean cars and trucks," but does not specify what the standards should be.

The Biden campaign also recently announced the establishment of a "Climate Engagement Advisory Council" tasked with mobilizing voters concerned about climate change and environmental justice. The council includes former Democratic candidate Tom Steyer and former EPA Administrator Carol Browner.

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