

President Biden Issues Sweeping Executive Order Addressing Climate Change at Home and Abroad

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President Joe Biden on January 27, 2021, issued the “Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad.”^[1] The executive order (EO) is sweeping and calls for a whole-of-government approach to climate change for both domestic and foreign affairs.

Internationally, the EO directs the director of National Intelligence, the secretary of Defense, the secretary of Homeland Security, and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to provide reports on the security implications of climate change. The EO also announced that the US will host a “Leaders’ Climate Summit” on April 22, with the aim of building momentum on increasing countries’ emission commitments ahead of this year’s United Nations Climate Change Conference of Parties, at which countries are expected to submit updated National Determined Contributions pursuant to the Paris Agreement, which Biden committed the country to rejoining.

Domestically, the EO establishes the White House Office of Domestic Climate Policy, which will be led by a national climate advisor and a newly established National Climate Force consisting of various cabinet and agency heads from across the government. Biden appointed Gina McCarthy, former Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) head from the Obama administration and former head of the Natural Resources Defense Council, as the national climate advisor. Her international counterpart representing the US abroad is former Senator and Secretary of State John Kerry. McCarthy will lead the development of a whole-of-government approach to climate change, where every governmental agency decision will take into account the impacts of climate change and greenhouse gas emissions. Every agency will have their eyes on climate change issues, from the Treasury Department to the Interior Department.

Additional significant elements of the EO include the following:

- **Federal Procurement** – The EO calls on the chair of the Council on Environmental Quality, the administrator of General Services, and the director of the Office of Management and Budget, together with other relevant agencies, to assist the national climate advisor in developing a plan on federal procurement of clean electricity and zero-emissions vehicles for the nearly 600,000 civilian vehicles owned or leased by the federal government.

- **Offshore Wind** – The EO directs the secretary of the Interior to review siting and permitting processes offshore in federal waters, with the goal of doubling offshore wind production by 2030.
- **Federal Oil and Gas Moratorium** – In one of the more controversial provisions of the EO, the president directs the secretary of the Interior to pause new oil and gas leasing on public lands and in offshore waters pending a review of federal oil and gas leasing and permitting practices. This is a clear signal that the oil and gas industry should expect policy guidance or, more likely, regulatory changes that will impose a more rigorous environmental review for new oil and gas leases and permits on federal lands and offshore.
- **30 x 30 Conservation** – Biden included a top item on the progressives' wish list in this EO: to remove and protect 30% of federal lands and waters from energy development and place them into conservation by 2030. A report on how to achieve this is due to Biden within 90 days.
- **Clean Energy Financing and Ending Fossil Fuel Subsidies** – The EO directs the Office of Management and Budget and other federal agencies to identify opportunities to spur the innovation, commercialization, and deployment of clean energy technology and infrastructure, as well as identify fossil fuel subsidies and eliminate them from the budget in 2022 and beyond.
- **Civilian Climate Corps** – The secretary of the Interior is directed to create a New Deal era–styled Civilian Climate Corps Initiative to create a pool of newly trained workers to address environmental conditions caused or exacerbated by climate change.
- **Environmental Justice** – The EO establishes the White House Environmental Justice Interagency Council and the White House Justice Advisory Council within EPA. The interagency council will be staffed by the heads of federal agencies and be tasked with developing a plan to address current and historical environmental injustice, including addressing “fence line” challenges in poor and minority communities that have been disproportionately exposed to environmental pollution.

^[1] <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/27/executive-order-on-tackling-the-climate-crisis-at-home-and-abroad/>.