

President Obama Announces Climate Action Plan

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On Tuesday, June 25, 2013, the White House released President Obama's long-anticipated [Climate Action Plan](#) ("Plan"). The Plan was the basis of the President's major speech today that set forth his second-term agenda on climate change. The Plan reflects the Administration's comprehensive agenda to address climate change issues through a wide variety of methods and strategies including regulations, funding, public-private partnerships, research and development, incentive programs, and international negotiations. The specific elements of the Plan are organized into three key pillars: 1) reducing domestic greenhouse gas ("GHG") emissions; 2) preparing for climate change impacts; and 3) providing international leadership on climate change.

Major highlights of the Plan include a [Presidential Memorandum](#) directing EPA to finalize not only GHG new source performance standards for new power plants, but also corresponding standards covering GHG emissions from existing power plants. Given the enormous amount of opposition EPA received to its April 2012 proposed rule, with over two million comments received, the Memorandum directs EPA to issue a new proposal setting forth carbon pollution standards for new power plants no later than September 20, 2013, and a final rule "in a timely fashion." The President's order that EPA issue a new proposal rather than finalize the April 2012 proposed rule indicates the Agency was already leaning towards modifying the proposed rule significantly in light of the intense opposition it received and the numerous legal arguments that had been raised by industry. The Memorandum also directs EPA to issue a proposed rule covering GHG emissions from modified, reconstructed, and existing power plants, all of which were not subject to the April 2012 proposal, no later than June 1, 2014, and a final rule no later than June 1, 2015. The existing source rule must require that States submit implementation plans no later than June 30, 2016. Consistent with various proposals that have been discussed with EPA, the Memorandum directs EPA to "allow the use of market-based instruments, performance standards, and other regulatory flexibilities."

Other GHG reduction initiatives include lowering emissions of hydrofluorocarbons used in refrigerants through EPA rules, lowering methane emissions through interagency and public-private partnerships, and expanding the Administration's existing clean cars and trucks regulations by adding post-2018 fuel economy standards for heavy-duty vehicles.

The Plan also calls for renewable electricity generation to be doubled by 2020, with the Department of the Interior directed to permit an additional 10 gigawatts of renewable energy on public lands by 2020. (A similar goal had been set and achieved in 2012.) Other federal agencies are called on to assist in achieving the President's renewable

energy goals, with the Department of Defense committing to deploy 3 gigawatts of renewable energy on military installations by 2020, and other federal agencies to install 100 megawatts of renewable energy on federally-subsidized housing by 2020. The Plan also calls for the nation's electric grid to be modernized by streamlining the permitting process for transmission projects, and for increased research and development funding of clean energy technologies such as carbon capture and sequestration.

The Plan includes a number of programs aimed at achieving the goal of doubling energy efficiency by 2030 from 2010 levels, such as loans and grants for energy efficiency investments, expanding the Department of Energy's Better Buildings Challenge to include multifamily housing.

With respect to climate change adaptation, the Plan calls for federal government agencies work on climate change adaptation and preparation on a number of fronts, including integrating climate change impacts and adaptation measures into major programs, community support, and funding for climate ready infrastructure projects.

On the international front, the Plan calls for continued leadership in international climate change negotiations such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Other international initiatives include bilateral climate agreements with countries such as China, Brazil, and India, participation in the Global Methane Initiative, and advocating for increased funding of clean energy sources and climate assistance to developing countries.

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