

Biden's climate policies raise alarm about environmental damage



President Joe Biden signs an executive order on climate change, in the State Dining Room of the White House, Wednesday, Jan. 27, 2021, in Washington. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci) [more >](#)

By Valerie Richardson - *The Washington Times* - Tuesday, February 9, 2021

President Biden's climate blitz already has proved costly to U.S. energy jobs, but concerns are mounting that his executive actions will do nothing to reduce emissions while threatening to wreak enormous environmental damage.

The president's biggest moves — reentering the Paris Agreement, shutting down the Keystone XL pipeline project and suspending fossil fuel leasing on federal lands — have been criticized as largely symbolic from a climate perspective, given that global oil demand is expected to rise and any drop in U.S. production would be offset by foreign competitors such as Russia and Saudi Arabia.

"When we potentially don't develop our oil and gas, we will shift production of the oil and gas to other countries with lower environmental standards, which is to say that per unit of oil or gas produced, there will be more greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere," Sen. Bill Cassidy, Louisiana Republican, said last week at a Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee hearing.

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Manhattan Institute senior fellow Mark Mills said Mr. Biden's moratorium on oil leases would be "utterly ineffective" in combating climate change, given that it "will not reduce the consumption of oil or the emissions of carbon dioxide from the combustion of petroleum."

Sen. John Barrasso, Wyoming Republican, said the biggest impact would be the loss of tens of thousands of jobs from Mr. Biden's "indefensible and ineffective climate policies."

"I think we have to stop fooling ourselves into thinking that eliminating U.S. fossil fuel production is going to solve the problem," the Wyoming Republican said. "It will just make America less competitive and less energy secure."

Canceling the Keystone XL cross-border permit is worse than doing nothing because it means crude oil will be moved instead from Alberta to U.S. terminals and refineries by truck or rail, which produce higher emissions than pipelines, said James Taylor, president of the free market Heartland Institute.

"All of those alternate transportation options emit more carbon dioxide than does transport by pipeline," Mr. Taylor said. "Killing Keystone XL is antithetical to Joe Biden's stated goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions."

None of that includes the environmental impact of Mr. Biden's ultimate climate goal: achieving net-zero U.S. carbon emissions by 2050 by replacing fossil fuels in power plants with wind and solar energy and by switching to electric vehicles.

The amount of mining necessary to produce the solar panels, wind turbines and batteries needed for such a transition would require an "unprecedented scale of mined, sometimes toxic, resources from the earth," said Scott Tinker, director of the bureau of economic geology at the University of Texas at Austin.

Mr. Tucker said the challenge for policymakers will be to figure out "how do we avoid robbing from nature Peter to pay climate Paul?"

Such questions are rising to the forefront as the Biden administration takes aggressive executive action to fight the "climate crisis" by rolling back President Trump's policies that led to U.S. energy independence in favor of limiting the increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide.

Even Biden global climate czar John F. Kerry acknowledged that meeting the U.S. targets under the Paris accord will have little impact on global emissions.

“[Mr. Biden] also knows that Paris alone is not enough — not when almost 90% of all of the planet’s emissions, global emissions — come from outside of U.S. borders,” Mr. Kerry said in his Jan. 27 remarks. “We could go to zero tomorrow, and the problem isn’t solved.”

He has argued that U.S. leadership as demonstrated by rejoining the Paris accord and taking other actions are critical to bending the global emissions curve.

The nation needs “credibility to go to the table, show people what we’re doing and push them to do more,” Mr. Kerry said on a call last month with U.S. mayors. “So everybody can understand it’s not fake, it’s not a phony, empty promise. It really is getting real.”

Biden officials have said little about the trade-offs involved in its energy transition with more mining, fossil fuel production overseas, and pollution from shipping and trucking oil rather than moving it through pipelines.

Rep. Gary Palmer, Alabama Republican, cited a 2016 study from the University of Alberta that found using pipelines for oil produced “between 61 and 77% fewer greenhouse gas emissions than rail.”

“It is also incredibly popular, as 100% of U.S. natural gas is shipped by pipe, and 70% of crude oil and petroleum products are shipped by pipe,” said Mr. Palmer, who sits on the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis.

Sierra Club President Michael Brune has tackled the issue by arguing that increased mining in countries such as Congo to meet renewable energy demand must be offset by more recycling, technological advances, and tougher environmental and labor laws abroad.

“We need to be mindful that our goal of 100% clean energy is more complicated than simply getting rid of X and replacing it with Y,” Mr. Brune said in a 2019 statement. “We already know some of the challenges ahead, and we can be sure there will be more. That’s OK. We’ll use every ounce of our creativity, innovation, and passion to meet those challenges.”

‘No free lunch in energy’

The renewables transition will result in heightened demand for rare earth minerals, the mining of which is controlled largely by China, but Mr. Mills said he also expects demand for other metals such as nickel to increase exponentially.

“It’s going to have to come from somewhere. It’ll have environmental impacts. I think we will probably not mine it here,” said Mr. Mills of the Manhattan Institute. “I don’t see any evidence that the U.S. is embracing the opening of new mines in a time frame that would be meaningful, so it’ll

come from Russia's Norilsk mine in the Arctic."

What frustrates Republicans is that U.S. emissions have been declining for 20 years, thanks in large part to natural gas replacing coal in electricity generation. The transition was made possible by hydraulic fracturing, which Mr. Biden seeks to limit with his leasing ban.

"These actions could actually move us away from our climate ambitions," said Sen. Steve Daines, Montana Republican.

U.S. emissions represent 14% of the global total, down in the two decades from 25%, while emissions in China, the world's largest producer of solar panels and wind turbines, have increased to 30% as the country continues to build coal-fired plants.

"Any ban on fracking is also expected to drastically increase emissions," Mr. Daines said. "I'm a chemical engineer by degree. I like to look at the numbers. The science tells us that these radical moves to the left are actually going to increase CO₂, not decrease CO₂."

An OnLocation report for the American Petroleum Institute released in September found that a moratorium on federal oil and gas leasing could result in a 5.5% increase in emissions by 2030 by raising the price of natural gas, prompting power plants to return to coal.

Exporting U.S. liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Asia could also reduce overall global emissions by

supplanting coal in electricity generation, said Fatih Birol, executive director of the International Energy Agency.

“The main purchaser of U.S. LNG today by far is China,” said Mr. Birol. “From an emissions point of view, U.S. LNG, if it replaces coal in Asia, it can lead to significant emissions declines, both in terms of carbon dioxide emissions but also air pollution.”

He also warned that U.S. methane emissions from natural gas have increased and stressed the importance of plugging leaks. Mr. Biden also reversed the Trump administration’s rollback of methane regulations.

The alternative for natural gas is Russia, but “Russian natural gas exports to Europe have over 40% higher emissions than U.S. natural gas,” Mr. Palmer said.

Mr. Biden also has called for replacing the federal vehicle fleet with electric cars, but most battery materials needed for electric vehicles are processed in China, where two-thirds of the grid is fueled by coal.

“That means that the energy to make battery materials emits carbon dioxide,” said Mr. Mills. “Just as a calibration point, making a battery and the materials for it that can store the amount of energy equal to a barrel of oil requires consuming about 100 barrels of oil equivalent of energy.”

What about the offsetting reduction in emissions during the life of the vehicle? It depends on where the cars are being charged and how the electricity is generated, he said.

“One European study finds that if you drive a Tesla in Norway, half of the emissions savings by not burning oil are wiped out by the making of the electric vehicle,” said Mr. Mills. “In Germany, two-thirds. In Poland, obviously they have an electric grid that’s coal-fired, then you have net increase in emissions.”

For Democrats, however, the threat from climate change appears to outweigh other considerations.

Sen. Angus S. King Jr., Maine Independent, said it was a “very, very dangerous time and facing what I think could be catastrophic changes” while acknowledging that there would be trade-offs.

“I understand there are environmental costs. There’s no free lunch in energy,” said Mr. King. “I learned that a long time ago.”

- *This article is based in part on wire service reports.*

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B bluhorizons 

10 February, 2021

The strategy of the Biden administration is to raise the price of fossil fuels so that alternative forms of energy are more attractive. This of course will result in higher manufacturing costs and also higher costs at the pump, but the green philosophy is that a price will have to be paid to save the planet.

One thing is clear: this administration does not believe in allowing market forces and technological advancement, otherwise known as "capitalism" to be the determining forces governing change. They believe in artificially manipulating the economy to achieve their goals. *(Edited)*

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P PragMan 

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According to this article regardless of which path one charts the environment still loses. So the real question is in which manner do we make ourselves feel better about destroying the environment; business as usual or new green deal. I liked the "robbing nature Peter to pay climate Paul". I think this should be the centerpiece of all discussions going forward as the current discussion does not bring to light all the trade-offs inherent in these new age schemes to have a modern society that

runs on two double A batteries.

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