



# Fact Sheet

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## Restoring American Leadership on Climate Change

On December 18, 2009, President Obama is scheduled to attend the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark. In addition to President Obama, the Executive Branch will be represented by Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson, Secretary of State Clinton, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, Energy Secretary Steven Chu, Commerce Secretary Gary Locke, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, Council of Environmental Quality Chair Nancy Sutley, Assistant to the President for Science and Technology Dr. John Holdren, and Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change Carol Browner.

The decision by President Obama, along with members of his Cabinet, to attend the climate change conference in Copenhagen reflects a historic shift from President Bush, whose policy record on climate change included:

- Undermining international climate change negotiations;
- Censuring or ignoring scientific reports on climate change;
- Attempting to defund or ignore scientific research on climate change;
- Circumventing a decision by the United States Supreme Court to address greenhouse gas emissions;
- Attempting to prevent having large emitters of greenhouse gas emissions collect and report data on their emissions; and
- Walking away from his commitment to work with Congress and others to “reduce emissions of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, mercury and carbon dioxide within a reasonable period of time” from power plants, using an emissions trading system.

In contrast, since reclaiming the majority in Congress Senate Democrats have taken the following significant steps to address climate change:

- Investing in clean energy through the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*;

- Increasing in non-emergency clean energy investments over three consecutive fiscal years;
- Passing an energy bill in 2007 that raised the fuel economy of the nation's vehicle for the first time in thirty years, set energy efficiency standards for light bulbs and improvements in federal buildings, and improved the nation's capability to invest in technologies like geothermal energy and carbon capture and sequestration;
- Passing a passenger rail bill in 2008 that authorized increased investments in high-speed rail and intercity passenger rail which helps to reduce transportation related greenhouse gas emissions;
- Passing a bill that reauthorized the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and mandated that NASA's Administrator take steps to ensure that the public has reliable and accurate access to the results of scientific research on global warming;
- Requiring that the Environmental Protection Agency develop and publish a rule requiring large emitters of greenhouse gas emissions collect and report data on their emissions;
- Converting the United States Capitol power plant from one that runs on coal to one that is powered by natural gas;
- Passing a bill that states Congress's belief that "human activity is a substantial cause of greenhouse gas accumulation in the atmosphere, mandatory steps will be required to slow or stop the growth of greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere, and Congress should enact a comprehensive effective national program of mandatory, market-based limits and incentives on emissions of greenhouse gases that slow, stop, and reverse the growth of such emissions at a rate and in a manner that will not significantly harm the United States economy and will encourage comparable action by other nations that are major trading partners and key contributors to global emissions;" and
- Favorably reporting energy and climate legislation to the Senate floor, which are expected to be merged into a comprehensive energy and climate bill.

Additionally, the Obama administration has:

- Announced the first ever [joint fuel economy/greenhouse gas emissions standards](#) for cars and trucks;
- [Established a rule](#), as required by Congress, that large emitters of greenhouse gas and suppliers in the United States collect and report data on their emissions;
- [Forged more stringent energy efficiency standards](#) for commercial and residential appliances, including microwaves, kitchen ranges, dishwashers, light bulbs and other common appliances;

- [Issued an Executive Order on federal sustainability](#), committing the federal government to lead by example and help build a clean energy economy through federal government operations;
- Accelerated its collaboration with [China](#), [India](#), [Mexico](#), [Canada](#) and other key international partners to combat climate change, coordinate clean energy research and development, and support the international climate talks;
- [Complied with the Supreme Court order](#) that the Environmental Protection Agency determine whether or not emissions of greenhouse gases from new motor vehicles cause or contribute to air pollution which may reasonably be anticipated to endanger public health or welfare, or whether the science is too uncertain to make a reasoned decision;
- [Proposed a partnership with nations in the western hemisphere](#) to advance energy security and combat climate change;
- Joined Canada and Mexico in proposing to [phase-down hydrofluorocarbon emissions](#), a very potent greenhouse gas, in developed and developing countries under the Montreal Protocol;
- [Launched the Major Economies Forum](#) in March 2009, creating a new dialogue among developed and emerging economies to combat climate change and promote clean energy;
- [Spearheaded an agreement at the Pittsburgh G20 summit](#) for all G20 nations to phase out their fossil fuel subsidies over the medium term and to work with other countries to do the same;
- [Proposed a new regulatory framework](#) to facilitate the development of alternative energy projects in an economic and environmentally sound manner that allows us to tap into the vast energy potential of the Outer Continental Shelf;
- [Expedited the leasing of federal lands](#) best suited to support solar energy projects; and
- Improved the ability of the federal government to [provide loan guarantees](#) for clean energy projects.

## ***Restoring America's Leadership on Climate Change***

Since retaking the majority in the Senate, Senate Democrats have worked to restore America's leadership on climate change. Here's a timeline of some of the most notable actions Senate Democrats have taken to reassert America's leadership on climate change.

## 2009

- **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.** Democrats passed the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*, which, as calculated by the Congressional Research Service, invested \$66.8 billion in clean energy. These historic investments are expected to result in a significant expansion in the use of renewable energy to generate electricity. Specifically, in 2010, the Energy Information Administration projects that renewable electricity generation will reach more than 56,000 megawatts, approximately 69,000 in 2011, and more than 85,000 in 2012. This represents an increase of approximately 41,000 megawatts in the use of renewable energy to generate electricity, or 93 percent between 2009 and 2012.
- **Fiscal Years 2010 and 2009 Clean Energy Research and Development Appropriations.** For Fiscal Year 2009, Democrats invested \$1.929 billion in non-emergency appropriations for the Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, which was \$206.1 million more than the Fiscal Year 2008 enacted level. For Fiscal Year 2010, Senate Democrats provided \$2.243 billion for the Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, which was \$313.9 million more than the Fiscal Year 2009 enacted level. Overall, since regaining the majority in Congress (Fiscal Year 2007 through Fiscal Year 2010), Senate Democrats have increased the overall investment in the Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy by \$768.2 million. This represents a 51 percent increase in funding for the Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy.
- **International Clean Energy and Climate Change Appropriations.** For Fiscal Year 2010, Democrats provided \$1.257 billion for bilateral and multilateral assistance to promote clean energy deployment, environmental, biodiversity and climate change programs worldwide through funding for programs like the Clean Technology Fund, Global Environment Facility, and the Strategic Climate Fund. The funding provided specifically includes \$122.75 million for adaptation programs, \$108.5 million for clean energy, \$74.45 for sustainable landscapes. Additionally, the total funding level provided is \$603 million more than was appropriated in Fiscal Year 2009.
- **U.S. Capitol Power Plant.** In May, at the request of Senator Reid and Speaker Pelosi, who announced that, unless backup capacity is needed, the U.S. Capitol Power Plant would use natural gas, instead of coal, as the sole fuel source for steam used at the Capitol complex to heat buildings and water. [\*Associated Press, May 1, 2009, "Congress to Stop Using Coal in Power Plant"\*](#)

## 2008

- **Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008.** Democrats gave travelers and commuters more environmentally friendly transportation options by authorizing \$13 billion over five years for Amtrak. The legislation also established a \$1.5 billion grant program for the construction of high-speed rail projects in designated high-speed rail corridors.
- **National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act of 2008.** Democrats passed the *National Aeronautics and Space Administration Authorization Act of 2008* which, among other things, mandated that NASA's Administrator take steps to ensure the public has reliable and accurate access to the results of scientific research on global warming.
- **Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008.** Democrats included language in the *Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008* that found that greenhouse gases are: 1) accumulating in the atmosphere and causing average temperatures to rise at a rate outside the range of natural variability; 2) there is a growing scientific consensus that human activity is a substantial cause of greenhouse gas accumulation in the atmosphere; and 3) mandatory steps will be required to slow or stop the growth of greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere.

This Sense of the Congress also stated that Congress should be enact a comprehensive and effective national program of mandatory, market-based limits and incentives on emissions of greenhouse gases that slow, stop, and reverse the growth of such emissions at a rate and in a manner that: 1) will not significantly harm the United States economy; and 2) will encourage comparable action by other nations that are major trading partners and key contributors to global emissions.

Finally, the legislation also contained \$3.5 million for the EPA to use its existing authority under the *Clean Air Act* to develop and publish a rule requiring mandatory reporting of greenhouse gas emissions above appropriate thresholds in all sectors of the economy; and

- **Fiscal Year 2008 Clean Energy Research and Development Appropriations.** For Fiscal Year 2008, Democrats invested \$1.722 billion for the Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, which was \$248.1 million more than the Fiscal Year 2007 enacted level.

## 2007

- **Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007.** According to an analysis by the Energy Information Administration, the *Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007* is expected to contribute to a reduction in energy-related

carbon dioxide emissions by over 500 million metric tons. For a frame of reference, this reduction is about the same amount as the current annual carbon dioxide emissions by South Korea, the world's ninth-largest source of carbon dioxide emissions.

- **Fiscal Year 2007 Clean Energy Research and Development Appropriations.** In Fiscal Year 2007, Senate Democrats invested \$1.474 billion for the Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, which was \$301 million more than the Fiscal Year 2006 enacted level.

## ***Undermining America's Leadership on Climate Change***

The Bush Administration's policies undermined America's leadership on climate change. Here's a timeline of Bush Administration actions that failed to address climate-related challenges.

### **2008**

- **Greenhouse Gas Registry.** On February 5, 2008, the Bush Administration's Fiscal Year 2009 budget request for the EPA failed to include funding for a national greenhouse gas registry, despite the fact that Congress ordered the EPA to create one in the *Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008*. [E&E Daily, February 5, 2008, "Lawmakers slam White House failure to fund greenhouse gas registry"](#)
- **Circumventing the Supreme Court.** On March 27, 2008, former EPA Administrator Johnson announced that instead of taking action to address climate change--as ordered by the Supreme Court--the agency would instead initiate a public comment period on the effects of climate change and the regulation of greenhouse gas emissions. The decision was widely viewed as an attempt by the Bush Administration to circumvent the Supreme Court's ruling. [Letter from former EPA Administrator Johnson to Senators Boxer and Inhofe, March 27, 2008](#)
- **Undermining Cooperation with Major Economies.** In April 2008, the Bush Administration refused to set an emission reduction target, but instead announced a new date, 2025, for the peaking of U.S. emissions. The announcement, according to media reports, caused tension at the 17-country climate change talks because it "provocatively staked out old positions already blamed for prolonged stalemate." [AFP, April 17, 2008, "Bush under fire at Paris climate meeting"](#)
- **Political Interference.** On June 2, 2008, NASA's Inspector General issued a report which found that political appointees in the Bush Administration suppressed NASA's climate change research. [New York Times, June 3, 2008, "NASA Office Is Criticized on Climate Reports"](#)
- **Ignoring Science.** On June 25, 2008, the *New York Times* reported that the Bush White House refused to open an e-mail from the EPA because it contained

information that was contrary to its views on climate change. A senior official at the EPA reported that the e-mails contained information which showed that the *Clean Air Act* could be used to reduce greenhouse gases. [New York Times, June 25, 2008, "White House Refused to Open Pollutants E-Mail"](#)

- **Ignoring Science.** On June 30, 2008, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the White House was trying to prevent the EPA from publishing a document on how the *Clean Air Act* could be used to regulate greenhouse gases. Specifically, the White House requested that “the EPA delete sections of the document that say such emissions endanger public welfare, say how those gases could be regulated, and show an analysis of the cost of regulating greenhouse gases in the U.S. and other countries.” [Wall Street Journal, June 30, 2008, "White House Blocks EPA Emissions Draft"](#)
- **Circumventing the Supreme Court.** On July 11, 2008, the Washington Post reported that the Bush Administration had decided to ignore the Supreme Court and not take any action to regulate the emission of greenhouse gases for the remainder of its time in office. Instead, the Administration decided to solicit further comments on the threats that climate change and global warming pose even though an overwhelming amount of evidence already exists on the subject. [Washington Post, July 11, 2008, "EPA Won't Act on Emissions This Year"](#)

## 2007

- **Circumventing the Supreme Court.** On April 2, 2007, the Supreme Court overruled the Bush Administration’s claims that it did not have authority under the Clean Air Act to regulate carbon dioxide as an air pollutant. The decision affirmed that emissions from cars and trucks are making a “meaningful contribution to greenhouse gas concentrations,” and that “a well-documented rise in global temperatures has coincided with a significant increase in the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.” In response, the Bush Administration announced in an Executive Order on May 14, 2007 that it would rely on a mix of fuel standards, technology subsidies and voluntary measures to address climate change--steps that would not achieve the necessary levels of reductions in greenhouse gas emissions dictated by scientific consensus. [ABCNews.com, April 2, 2007, "Supreme Court Rejects Bush in Global Warming Debate"](#)
- **Climate Change Reports.** On August 21, 2007, a federal judge ruled that the Bush Administration was in violation of the *Global Change Research Act of 1990*, which mandates that the Administration “prepare a scientific assessment every four years of current climate change research and effects.” Instead, the Administration had attempted to issue a series of smaller and narrower reports on climate change and its various impacts. [E&E News PM, August 21, 2007, "Judge sides with enviros in national assessment case"](#)
- **Undermining International Climate Negotiations.** In September 2007, the prior administration decided to skip a meeting of global leaders that discussed how to address climate change. Instead, the prior administration chose

to initiate a separate meeting of global leaders to substitute for efforts to develop a binding international agreement. [New York Times, September 23, 2007, "Bush to Skip U.N. Talks on Global Warming"](#)

- **Political Interference.** On October 23, 2007, sources with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported that the testimony of CDC Director Dr. Julie Gerberding, prepared for an Environment and Public Works Committee hearing on the health effects of global warming, had been "eviscerated" by other Bush Administration officials. Defending these actions, an Administration spokesperson announced in a press conference after the hearing that the edits were done to make the testimony consistent with the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). However, a side-by-side comparison produced by the Environment and Public Works Committee showed that virtually all of the deleted testimony had been supported by the IPCC's findings on global warming health effects. [Associated Press, 10/24/07, "Heavy Editing is Alleged in Climate Testimony"](#)
- **Undermining International Climate Negotiations.** In December 2007, multiple nations criticized the role of the Bush Administration at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bali, Indonesia. For instance, the U.S. delegation was booed by multiple nations when it tried to block a proposal on the level of greenhouse gas emission reductions that developing nations would be required to make. Additionally, the negotiations were tarnished by threats that the European Union would boycott the conference because of a disagreement with the U.S. delegation over whether any future climate treaty would include specific greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for rich nations. [New York Times, December 16, 2007, "Climate Plan Looks Beyond Bush's Tenure"](#) and ["High and low points of Bali climate talks"](#)

## 2006

- **Ignoring Science.** On September 26, 2006, the journal *Nature* reported that officials at the Bush Commerce Department blocked release of a report in May 2006 that said that global warming may be contributing to stronger hurricanes is part of the current state of hurricane science. The report was to be circulated in a press kit at the beginning of hurricane season. [Associated Press, September 27, 2006, "Nature: Commerce official withheld panel finding on global warming"](#)
- **Supreme Court.** On November 26, 2006, the Bush Administration argued against 12 states and other groups that claimed that the EPA had the authority to regulate carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions under the *Clean Air Act*. [NPR, November 29, 2006, "High Court Hears Its First Global Warming Case"](#)

## 2005

- **Political Interference.** On June 8, 2005, the *New York Times* reported that the Bush Administration repeatedly edited government climate change reports to downplay the links between greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. The

changes inserted by the Administration included adding words like “significant” or “fundamental” before the word “uncertainty” to produce doubt about the veracity of the reports. [New York Times, June 8, 2005, “Bush Aide Softened Greenhouse Gas Links to Global Warming”](#)

- **G-8 Climate negotiations.** On June 17, 2005, the *Washington Post* reported that officials from the Bush Administration were working to weaken a proposal by the eight largest industrial nations to combat climate change despite agreement by most other nations that mandatory controls are needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. [Washington Post, June 17, 2005, “U.S. Pressure Weakens G-8 Climate Plan”](#)
- **Undermining International Climate Negotiations in Montreal.** On December 2, 2005, at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Montreal, Canada, the Bush Administration walked out of a meeting to protest efforts to find new ways to curb greenhouse gas emissions. The decision to walkout of the meeting was seen as the capstone of two weeks of efforts by the Administration to prevent any new initiatives from being discussed that would address climate change. [New York Times, December 9, 2005, “U.S. Delegation Walks Out of Climate Talks”](#)

## 2004

- **Eliminating U.S. Scientific Research on Climate Change.** On February 2, 2004, the Bush Administration proposed to eliminate climate change programs in its Fiscal Year 2005 budget for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The prior administration had proposed to eliminate funding for NOAA’s abrupt climate change program and paleoclimate program. [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, February 2, 2004, Fiscal Year 2005 Budget Submission to Congress](#)
- **NAS report.** On February 18, 2004, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) issued a report on the Bush Administration’s climate change science program that urged an immediate shift from planning more federal climate research to actually funding the research. The NAS said, “there is no evidence in the [Bush] plan or elsewhere of a commitment to provide the necessary funds for these newer or expanded program elements.” [National Academies Press, 2004, “Implementing Climate and Global Change Research: A Review of the Final U.S. Climate Change Science Program Strategic Plan”](#)

## 2003

- **Political Interference.** On April 29, 2003, the Bush Administration deleted major portions devoted to climate change in a report prepared by the EPA that was intended to provide a comprehensive review about various environmental problems. Among the portions of the draft report that the Administration deleted were references to conclusions about the likely human contributions to climate change and a study showing that global temperatures had risen sharply in the previous decade compared with the last 1,000 years. [New York Times, June 19, 2003, “Report by the E.P.A. Leaves Out Data on Climate Change”](#)

- **Arguing Against Taking Action to Regulate Emissions.** On September 8, 2003, the Bush Administration denied a petition submitted by organizations which petitioned it to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicles under the *Clean Air Act*. *Control of Emissions from New Highway Vehicles and Engines, September 8, 2003, 68 Fed. Reg. 52922*

## 2002

- **Ignoring Science.** On June 5, 2002, former President Bush dismissed a report produced by his own EPA that stated the United States would be substantially changed in the next few decades by climate change. According to press reports, former President Bush chose to ignore the report to avoid having to take “aggressive” action to address climate change. [New York Times, June 5, 2009, “President Distances Himself From Global Warming Report”](#)
- **Undermining International Climate Negotiations in New Delhi.** In October 2002, the Bush Administration made certain that no progress was made on international efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the eighth conference of the parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. [New York Times, October 23, 2002, “Climate Talks Will Shift Focus From Emissions”](#)
- **Political Interference.** In April 2002, after a year of lobbying, the Bush Administration replaced Robert Watson as chairman of the United Nation’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). In 2001, the ExxonMobil Corporation had sent a letter to the Bush Administration asking, “Can Watson be replaced now at the request of the U.S.?” [New York Times, April 2, 2008, “Dispute Arises Over a Push To Change Climate Panel”](#)

## 2001

- **Kyoto.** On March 28, 2001, the prior administration announced that it would not support ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, the international treaty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The announcement came just weeks after the world’s eighth largest industrialized nations issued a declaration that they would strive to reach an agreement on the treaty. [CNN, March 29, 2001, “Bush Firm over Kyoto Stance”](#)

**Walking Away from Prior Emission Reduction Commitments.** On March 13, 2001, former President Bush sent a letter to Senators Hagel, Helms, Roberts and Craig, which said “the government should not impose on power plants mandatory emissions for carbon dioxide.” As a candidate for President, then-Governor Bush promised to “reduce emissions of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, mercury and carbon dioxide within a reasonable period of time” from power plants, using an emissions trading system. [Letter to Senators Hagel, Helms, Roberts, and Craig, March 13, 2001](#)