

The Interregnum: What to Expect

The Biden Administration will be in-waiting for seventy days leading up to January 20, 2021. Its focus will be putting its team together. Expect in the coming days announcements of officials that would serve as the foundation and scaffolding of a White House operation such as the Chief of Staff, National Security Advisor, Legislative Director, COVID-19 Coordinator, and Press Secretary. Once completed, the next tranche of announcements of individuals would be expected to be announced who would be nominees for the management of the broader government's agencies and departments.

The President-Elect secured an electoral and popular vote similar to the past four presidential elections that were considered "landslides". However, the inability to capture control of the Senate, for now, will curb the more ambitious policy demands of progressives. Items on the campaign's priorities list will likely be tempered given the prospect of a Senate that could bottle-up initiatives and a House that could see the Democratic cohesiveness of the past four years splinter over how aggressively to advance progressive policies. The Green New Deal's aspirational approach to restructuring the U.S. economy to reduce threats from greenhouse gases is likely to remain an aspiration with pieces of the program considered moderate in approach, like encouraging adoption of renewable energy technologies, gaining traction. And the priority to restructure the federal tax code and claw back some of the corporate and wealthy taxpayers' tax reductions face all but insurmountable obstacles in the Senate. Three agenda items that will continue to enjoy a strong push, despite divided government, will be environmental justice, judicial, and immigration policy reforms

The Biden legislative agenda at the outset is likely to target three prominent matters and the issue of all issues will be securing federal assistance for state and local governments, businesses and individuals, and implementing a national COVID-19 response. And, in tandem with this priority, the critical need to jumpstart the economy probably means enactment of a national infrastructure program. Finally, healthcare should be expected to command the attention of a Biden Administration, if the Supreme Court rules against the Affordable Care Act, striking down the remaining vestiges the law.

The Biden Building Back Better Plan seeks to secure \$2 trillion in infrastructure assistance to support all elements of the nation's infrastructure from water to the electric grid to airports, ports, highways, broadband and public education. It would be an ambitious initiative, but given that the House has approved a \$1.5 trillion package and the Senate appears receptive to infrastructure funding, infrastructure policy looks like a sound bet outside of COVID-19 to be the initiative to watch.