



# Inside Energy

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## **RE: Biden Recycles Failed Energy Policy**

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In a hurry to publish a document covering the latest policy flip flop pandering to the far left wing of his party, Joe Biden's campaign team cut and pasted the "Clean Energy Revolution" without attribution. The effort raised the old specter of plagiarism. Unrecognized is the bigger mistake of copying the failed energy policies of the Obama years.

The big green dream is to fuel the entire United States with electricity, and then supply that electricity with wind and solar power. The primary technical barrier to meeting that goal is lack of reliability. Solar panels only work about five hours a day, and wind turbines about eight hours, and days can go by with no power production. Overcoming the obstacle requires battery backup, and current batteries are crushingly expensive. Biden's plan calls for investing in research to invent a battery that will reduce cost by ninety percent. Presidents Obama and Trump already tried that. In fact, researchers have been trying to invent such a battery for over one hundred years!

Undaunted by the physical impossibility of reaching the dream, President Obama led the effort to force development of an economy fueled with "green" power. Massive subsidies and mandates were passed by federal and state governments for wind, solar, and electric vehicles. Despite progress in achieving economies of scale, these technologies still cost about twice as much as existing coal, natural gas, and nuclear electric power, and conventional vehicles with internal combustion engines. Biden's plan continues these mandates.

Given a choice, Americans reject these expensive technologies. According to data from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, when given the option to pay even a little extra to receive electric power from only renewable sources, only about three percent of the population will pay anything extra. Despite subsidies as high as \$11,000 a car, electric vehicles only make up one half of one percent of new vehicles purchased, and the number of buyers seems to be shrinking as the subsidies end. Biden wants to extend the subsidies.

To force reluctant consumers to buy expensive alternatives, taxes to raise the cost of conventional energy and vehicles have been proposed. Too timid to call directly for a national, economy wide tax on carbon dioxide emissions, Biden demands Congress pass an "enforcement mechanism" to support his climate policies. The tax idea didn't get a Congressional hearing in 2010 when proposed by President Obama. Democrats held a super majority in the House and Senate, but refused to even discuss the idea as it is a political non-starter. Recently, imposing the tax brought down governments in Australia, and some Canadian Provinces, and ended in France in the face of violent riots. Presidential candidates Jay Inslee and Bernie Sanders couldn't pass carbon taxes in their very liberal home states of Washington and Vermont. Biden is afraid to even use the words "carbon tax".

Obama tried to harness the enforcement power of the entire federal government to force adoption of his expensive, impractical goals. Every agency was forced to incorporate climate planning in their budgets, and to develop regulations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The effort misdirected federal agencies attention from their core goals. EPA efforts to improve air and water quality, and in finishing Superfund site cleanups ground to a halt. The EPA spent a massive amount of time promulgating four major climate change based regulations using questionable Clean Air Act authority, and all were overturned by the courts. The Department of Defense neglected defense readiness, and permitting of critical infrastructure improvements stopped. Biden would go back to these debilitating policies.

Obama adopted the Paris Accord to reduce greenhouse gas emissions without following constitutional requirements to gain Senate consent for an international treaty. He also worked to stop international aid for developing



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countries to develop conventional electric power sources. Globally, inexpensive, reliable energy has lifted billions out of poverty, doubled life expectancy, improved health, literacy, and personal freedom. Biden wants to go back to the Obama policies and deny developing countries these benefits keeping a billion people in abject poverty. However, countries like India and China are putting their self-interest first, as they should. The US has reduced emissions 13% from the 2005 base period while the rest of the world has ignored their Paris Accord goals and increased emissions dramatically.

The US reduction in emissions has been driven by the natural gas drilling revolution producing abundant, low cost gas to replace higher carbon dioxide emitting coal. Biden wants to go back to Obama era restrictions on energy development on federal lands. Apparently, he doesn't realize the energy revolution that has made America energy independent, while reducing energy costs dramatically, occurred almost exclusively on private lands.

The Biden plan calls for continuing research on carbon dioxide sequestration, making bio-fuels from agricultural waste, and a hydrogen based energy economy that have all failed miserably. Some of Biden's ideas are simply magical thinking about rebuilding every existing building to net zero energy standards, inventing new zero carbon dioxide emitting fuels for airplanes and industries like steel, cement, and chemicals. He also wants to build a national high speed rail system similar to the one California had to abandon, and to convince China to stop cheating on international treaties.

Biden's plan, copied from others, is driven by panic over fears of dramatic changes in extreme weather events, and massive sea level rise that are rejected by most climate scientists, including those at the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Biden claims his program will cost \$1.7 trillion to cut emissions in half from net 2005 levels by 2035, a likely underestimate of the true costs. The estimated cost works out to six hundred eighty dollars a ton, seven to twenty times higher than ever proposed for tax rates, and one hundred twenty times the recent cost for an emissions allowance from a regional auction, to save 0.1 °F by 2100. In summary, Biden ignores the incredibly high cost, and impractical nature of his agenda. He also follows the incorrect assumption people in the US and around the world will ignore their own self-interest. Do we really want a president who is so out of touch with reality?

