



Policy Movers

The Biden Administration

Key Energy and Environment Nominees

Biden Unveils Climate Team

On Saturday, Dec. 19, 2020, President-elect Joe Biden unveiled his climate team signaling the administration would make energy and environmental policy a top priority.

During the speech, Biden highlighted policy priorities that could also be important economic drivers:



- **Automotive Sector:** Expanding the charging station network for electric vehicles and purchasing more EVs for the government fleet
- **Energy Sector:** Transitioning to cleaner sources of electricity and plugging more than 3 million abandoned oil and gas wells
- **Building Sector:** Building 11.5 million energy-efficient public housing units

Biden Unveils Climate Team

The roster for the Biden climate team includes a diverse group of individuals emphasizing the administration's commitment to environmental justice for previously underrepresented groups. Many of the nominees will need to be confirmed by the Senate in order to implement policy goals.

Role	Nominee	Senate Confirmed
National Security Climate Envoy	Former Sec. of State John Kerry	No
White House Climate Coordinator	Former EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy	No
Chair, CEQ	Brenda Mallory	Yes
Administrator, EPA	Michael Regan	Yes
Secretary of the Interior	Rep. Deb Haaland (D-NM)	Yes
Secretary of Energy	Former MI Gov. Jennifer Granholm	Yes

Confirmation Battles Ahead

The outcome of the Georgia Senate runoff elections will have an impact on the confirmation process. Sen. Kevin Cramer (R-ND) predicted “a bit of a brawl” over EPA and Interior picks.



Sen. Barrasso stands with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY)
Source: Washington Post

Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY), currently the chair of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, will replace Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) as chair of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Barrasso has prioritized nuclear energy and carbon capture technologies as solutions to climate change. Sen. Barrasso has long been a champion of oil and gas, coal and wind and will want to see more activity on public lands. During his tenure as chair of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, he advanced legislation encouraging more widespread energy development on tribal lands.

Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) will now be the most senior Republican on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

- ➔ National Security Climate Envoy
- ➔ White House Climate Coordinator
- ➔ White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Chair
- ➔ Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator
- ➔ Department of the Interior (DOI) Secretary
- ➔ Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary

Key Appointees



National Security Climate Envoy

John Kerry



Kerry was one of the key architects of **the Paris Agreement**, which was signed by the U.S. in 2016, and in statements in November he stated, “Paris alone is not enough. At the global meeting in Glasgow, one year from now, all nations must raise ambition together, or we will all fail together.”

While secretary of state, Kerry led efforts to increase investment in **carbon capture and storage** technology through the China-U.S. Climate Change Working Group.

Kerry made statements during the election that the Biden administration recognizes that “we need the **natural gas as a transition fuel** as we move into the new technologies. And we can’t just cut it off today or tomorrow, and I think reasonable people understand that.”

Current Occupation

- Board Member, American Security Project
- Co-founder, World War Zero



Previous Government Roles

- Secretary of State (2013–2017)
- United States Senator from Massachusetts (1985–2013)
 - Chair, Senate Foreign Relations Committee (2009–2013)
 - Chair, Senate Small Business Committee (2007–2009)
- Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts (1983–1985)

National Security Climate Envoy

John Kerry



Kerry endorsed Krane Funds Advisor's Global Carbon exchange-traded fund, which tracks the largest markets for carbon credits in the U.S. and Europe, in July 2020, indicating support for **carbon pricing**. "The climate crisis threatens life itself. Just as COVID-19 demanded an early response, so do the threats of climate disaster. One of the most powerful ways the world can collaborate to reduce emissions is to move toward carbon pricing that puts basic, free-market economics to work," he stated in July 2020.

In December 2020, Kerry reiterated the administration's commitment to **environmental justice**. "We are deeply focused on climate justice. It is the core of what we are fighting for. I talk about it in every comment I ever make publicly about what happens when diesel trucks are diverted to low-income communities, because that's an element of the problem we face today. Low-income people usually pay the higher price."

White House Climate Coordinator

Gina McCarthy



During her tenure as EPA administrator, McCarthy helped craft the **Clean Power Plan**, which aimed to reduce carbon emissions from the power sector by 32% by 2030.

In 2016, McCarthy's EPA issued regulations requiring oil and gas companies to monitor and repair **methane** leaks from pipelines, wells and storage facilities. She stated in February 2020 that, "[t]here's a lot of new creative thinking about [**carbon capture and storage**], but the thing we're not looking at is the fact that you extract the fossil fuels itself is a decision point of emitting significant amounts of methane."

Current Occupation

- President and CEO, Natural Resources Defense Council

Previous Government Roles

- Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency (2013–2017)
- Assistant Administrator, EPA Office of Air and Radiation (2009–2013)
- Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (2004–2009)
- Deputy Secretary, Massachusetts Office of Commonwealth Development (2004–2009)
- Undersecretary for Policy, Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (1999–2003)



White House Climate Coordinator

Gina McCarthy



McCarthy has previously acknowledged the role of **natural gas** during the Obama years, stating in 2014 that “[t]he abundance of low-cost natural gas has really started an energy transition that we are taking advantage of and hoping to follow through our [Clean Power Plan] process. So it’s been a significant benefit to the United States. It’s been a significant benefit to air quality.” However, she said in January 2020, “[t]here is still, I think, a continued need to keep our eye on the prize, and our eye on the prize is that we need to reduce fossil fuels. We need to go to clean energy, not cleaner energy.”

McCarthy has expressed positive views of a **carbon tax** in the past. In 2017 she stated, “[n]ow we have even Republicans proposing that there be a price on carbon through a carbon tax and dividend system. [...] If Congress can pass a tax that does more than we’re able to do through regulation, I would consider that to be one of the greatest successes we’ve had to address one of the greatest public health threats of our time.”

McCarthy has made several statements in support of **environmental justice**. In November 2020, she stated, “for far too long, people of color and low-income communities have paid the highest price for the climate crisis, despite having done the least to cause it. Biden’s plan will address those inequities head-on, making environmental justice a priority across every federal agency.” She’s also tweeted in December 2020 that she will approach the coordination between agencies “centering **climate action and clean energy** in their federal policies and investments. And [agencies] should do it in a way that continues to advance labor interests and environmental justice in communities across the country.”

Chair, Council on Environmental Quality

Brenda Mallory



Mallory criticized the Trump administration's overhaul of the **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** implementing regulations in a November 2019 [article](#), writing, “[w]hile striving for greater efficiency can be a laudable goal, NEPA was not intended to be a process for rubber-stamping government decisions.” Mallory will likely make the rewrite a top priority for CEQ, incorporating **climate change** and the **social costs** into environmental analyses.

Current Occupation

- Director of Regulatory Policy, Southern Environmental Law Center

Previous Government Roles

- General Counsel, White House Council on Environmental Quality (2014–2017)
- Environmental Protection Agency:
 - Principal Deputy General Counsel (2010–2014)
 - Associate General Counsel, Pesticide and Toxic Substances Law (2005–2010)
 - Associate Deputy General Counsel (2003–2005)



Administrator, EPA

Michael Regan



Regan played a key role shaping North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper's 2018 executive order that directed the state to cut **greenhouse gas emissions** by 40% by 2025.

Regan also helped craft the state's **Clean Energy Plan**, which aims to reduce power sector emissions by 70% by 2030, achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, and accelerate clean energy innovation, development, and deployment.

Current Occupation

- Secretary, North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (2017–present)

Previous Government Roles

- Environmental Protection Agency:
 - National Program Manager – Program Design, Office of Air Quality Planning & Standards (2006–2008)
 - Environmental Protection Specialist, Office of Air Quality Planning & Standards (2003–2006)
 - Special Assistant, Director of Radiation and Indoor Air (2001–2003)
 - Special Assistant, U.S. Assistant Administrator of Air and Radiation (1998–2001)

Administrator, EPA

Michael Regan



In August 2020, the North Carolina DEQ blocked a **water quality certification** for the Mountain Valley Pipeline, with Regan stating, “North Carolina’s clean energy future is not dependent on adding more **natural gas infrastructure** . . . We should invest in **clean, renewable energy sources** and the economic benefits of energy innovation.” However, North Carolina DEQ issued a water quality certification to the now-abandoned Atlantic Coast Pipeline in 2018.

The North Carolina DEQ also challenged the Trump administration’s **Clean Water Act** rules impacting federal jurisdiction over clean water enforcements.

As secretary of the North Carolina DEQ, Regan established an **Environmental Justice** and Equity Advisory Board.

Secretary, Department of the Interior

Rep. Deb Haaland (D-NM)



A supporter of the **Green New Deal**, Rep. Haaland will likely receive many questions about her stance on fossil fuel extraction. In 2018, she tweeted “[a]s a Native American woman who’s ancestral homeland is under attack from the Fossil Fuel Industry: I 100% support a Green New Deal and a Congressional Climate Commission.” Rep. Haaland also endorsed legislation (H.R.9) that would keep the U.S. in the **Paris Agreement**.

Rep. Haaland sees a new role for public lands and the government in the clean energy transition. In 2019 she stated, “I am wholeheartedly against **fracking and drilling on public lands**.” And in November 2020 she stated “[**I**]easing practices need to be changed. We need to make sure we’re promoting and increasing clean-energy leases.”

Current Occupation

- Representative, New Mexico 1st Congressional District (2018–present)

Previous Government Roles

- Tribal Administrator, San Felipe Pueblo (2013–2015)

Secretary, Department of Energy

Jennifer Granholm



Granholm's former role as Michigan governor makes her poised to work with American auto manufacturers during the administration's push for accelerated adoption of **electric vehicles**. Granholm is an enthusiastic supporter of electric vehicles.

When asked for her opinion on the Dakota Access Pipeline in 2016, Granholm said, "We ought to be doing everything we possibly can to keep **fossil fuel energy** in the ground and developing the renewable side."

Current Occupation

- Distinguished Professor, University of California, Berkeley Goldman School of Public Policy

Previous Government Roles

- Governor of Michigan (2003–2011)
- Michigan Attorney General (1999–2003)

Secretary, Department of Energy

Jennifer Granholm



In a November 2020 [op-ed](#), Granholm called for a “**low-carbon recovery**” from the COVID-19 pandemic that would create jobs and reduce emissions. Granholm previously founded the American Jobs Project in 2014, which focused on promoting advanced manufacturing jobs in clean energy.

While governor of Michigan, Granholm enacted a **renewable portfolio standard** that required the state to generate 10% of its energy from renewable sources by 2015 and 25% by 2025. In 2018 she stated, “[i]nstalled **wind power** today is cheaper than stuff powered by coal or even than natural gas in many cases, the price of **natural gas** having bumped up a bit. When you think about it, wind is free, the sun is free; it’s just a question of how you get the technology in the ground and how you pay for those upfront costs of the turbines or the solar panels.”

Granholm has also advocated for **environmental justice**. Gov. Granholm signed an executive order in 2008 requiring the state Department of Environmental Quality to develop an environmental justice plan.

- ➔ Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- ➔ Department of Transportation (DOT)
- ➔ U.S. Treasury Department

- ➔ Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
- ➔ Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)
- ➔ Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)
- ➔ Department of Commerce (DOC)

Other Agencies with a Climate Impact



Department of Agriculture (USDA)



USDA has emerged as an important player in the environmental space in recent years as questions arise about the link between certain **farming practices** and **negative impacts on the climate**, such as the levels of **greenhouse gas emissions** from livestock. USDA also **supports farmers** through various means, manages the **U.S. Forest Service** and administers **food aid programs**, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).



Tom Vilsack, Nominee for Secretary of Agriculture

Previous Experience

- CEO, U.S. Dairy Export Council (Present)
- Secretary, USDA (2009–2017)
- Governor, Iowa (1999–2007)
- State Senator, Iowa (1993–1999)

First Tenure as USDA Secretary

Under Vilsack's leadership, USDA established five regional research centers devoted to developing biofuels, invested over \$1 billion in the supply chain of biofuels and bioenergy, reduced energy costs and improved efficiency. He was criticized by environmental groups for being too supportive of industrial agriculture and large agricultural companies over new sustainable farming practices.

Department of Transportation (DOT)



The next Transportation Secretary will oversee DOT during the development and implementation of the upcoming **surface transportation bill**, which will need to include funding mechanisms for the beleaguered Highway Trust Fund. They will also oversee some **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)** permitting changes and could modify policies related to **energy conservation, energy efficiency, alternative fuels and energy security**, among other areas.



Pete Buttigieg, Nominee for Secretary of Transportation

Previous Experience

- Mayor, South Bend IN (2012–2020)
- Oxford University (BA)
- Harvard University (AB)
- Lieutenant, U.S. Navy

Campaign Transportation Plan

- \$1 trillion topline spending
 - \$165 billion for the Highway Trust Fund
 - Raise the estate tax, modify the capital gains tax and propose new user fee systems, such as vehicle miles traveled (VMT) taxes
- National “Vision Zero” policy, new road safety provisions, investments in autonomous and electric vehicles and broadband expansion.

U.S. Treasury Department



Biden's treasury secretary will inherit an economy shaken by the COVID-19 pandemic. Yellen is widely viewed as an academic, not a political actor, and would draw on the experience in **monetary policy** matters she gleaned during her time leading the Federal Reserve. She will be heavily involved in negotiating future **economic stimulus packages** while steering the administration's **fiscal agenda**.



Janet Yellen, Nominee for Secretary of the Treasury

Previous Experience

- Chair, Federal Reserve System (2014–2018)
- Vice Chair, Federal Reserve System (2010–2014)
- Member, Federal Open Market Committee (2008–2010)
- Chair, Council of Economic Advisers (1997–1999)

Energy Publications

- Coauthored a report that explained how financial regulators can address climate risk that argued “The scale of the challenge means that carbon prices alone are not enough.” ([October 2020](#))
- Authored a *Wall Street Journal* article arguing for a carbon tax. ([January 2019](#))

Office of Management and Budget (OMB)



OMB plays a powerful part in fulfilling the president's agenda across the executive branch. The office reviews **all agency rules, reports, congressional testimony** and **draft bills**, among other items, to ensure they are not contradictory. If confirmed, Tanden will also be responsible for crafting the Biden administration's **budget proposals**. She would likely propose larger federal spending relative to the Trump administration, inflating many of the programs Republicans would prefer receive little, if any, additional funding.



Neera Tanden, Nominee for OMB Director

Previous Experience

- CEO, Center for American Progress (Present)
- Senior Advisor, Office of Health Reform, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Barack Obama Administration (2009–2010)
- Director of Domestic Policy, Obama for America (2008)
- Policy Director, Hillary Clinton for President (2007–2008)

Energy Publication

- Statement in support of California executive order requiring sales of all new passenger vehicles to be zero-emissions by 2035. ([September 2020](#))

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)



FERC is expected to play a key role in executing Biden's **climate agenda**. The agency has broad responsibilities in the **electric, natural gas, liquefied natural gas, hydropower** and **oil** sectors. It **oversees interstate transmission of various power sources, energy market regulation, energy infrastructure security** and **reliability**, among other items. Under the Trump administration, FERC's enforcement activity dropped while litigation rose; these trends are likely to flip under a Democrat-led and, eventually, Democrat-controlled FERC.



Richard Glick
Term: 2017–2022



Neil Chatterjee
Term: 2017–2021



James Danly
Term: 2020–2023



Allison Clements
Term: 2020–2024



Mark Christie
Term: 2020–2024

FERC is composed of five commissioners; no more than three may be of the same political party. Biden is widely expected to appoint Richard Glick to be FERC chair after his inauguration. Glick would replace current chair James Danly, a Republican. FERC will remain 3-2 Republican until at least June 2021 when Chatterjee's term ends.

Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)

The SEC will shift to a Democratic majority under the Biden administration, led by an as-yet-unappointed chair. The commission will likely act to enhance **corporate disclosures**, increase **diversity** at financial institutions, and restrict **executive compensation**, among other initiatives. On the disclosure front, a Democratic chair may seek to require public companies to provide investors with more information about **climate risk** by standardizing such disclosures. They may also move to modify or reverse the recently finalized foreign payments rule on sums paid to the U.S. government or foreign governments for the **commercial development of oil, natural gas or minerals**.



SEC Chair



Allison Herren Lee
Term: 2019–2022



Elad Roisman
Term: 2018–2023



Caroline Crenshaw
Term: 2020–2024



Hester Peirce
Term: 2018–2025

The SEC is composed of five commissioners; no more than three may be of the same political party. Current SEC Chair Jay Clayton, a Republican, will depart at the end of 2020, clearing the path for Biden's eventual nominee. Lee is expected to serve as interim chair and is a contender for the role outright.

Department of Commerce (DOC)



The commerce secretary oversees a broad range of subagencies and policy areas, including the **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)** and the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Through NOAA, Commerce is also responsible for the **National Marine Fisheries Service** and the **National Weather Service**. The administration produces detailed **climate reports**, nautical charts, **fishing regulations** and coastal management recommendations, among other things. As such, the incoming secretary will be assessed partially on their history with the scientific and environmental communities.

President-elect Biden has not yet nominated a commerce secretary. The following individuals are considered contenders:

Rohit Chopra. Chopra is a commissioner on the Federal Trade Commission, where he has served since 2018. Before that, he was an advisor on the Hillary Clinton campaign and a special advisor to the undersecretary of education in the Obama administration.

Susan Helper. Helper was a senior economist in the Obama administration's Council of Economic Advisors and the chief economist in the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Tom Nides. Nides is currently vice chairman at Morgan Stanley, having previously served as deputy secretary of state in the Obama administration.