

# [***Biden marks Earth Day by going after GOP, announcing $7 billion in federal solar power grants***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BVP-RGD1-JC5B-G1FJ-00000-00&context=1516831)

The Associated Press

April 22, 2024 Monday 9:52 PM GMT

Copyright 2024 Associated Press All Rights Reserved

**Section:** BUSINESS NEWS; INTERNATIONAL NEWS; DOMESTIC NEWS; POLITICAL NEWS; STATE AND REGIONAL

**Length:** 1096 words

**Byline:** ALEXA ST. JOHN and WILL WEISSERT, Associated Press

**Dateline:** TRIANGLE, Virginia

**Body**

TRIANGLE, Virginia — President [*Joe Biden*](https://apnews.com/hub/joe-biden) marked [*Earth Day*](https://apnews.com/article/earth-day-gaylord-nelson-climate-pollution-explain-e854ac748cf0f0e6c757a50aee4e785a) by announcing $7 billion in federal grants for residential solar projects serving 900,000-plus households in low- and middle-income communities — while criticizing Republicans who want to gut his policies to address climate change.

Seeking reelection in November, Biden said, “Despite the overwhelming devastation in red and blue states, there are still those who deny the climate is in crisis."

He took specific aim at supporters of former President Donald Trump's “Make America Great Again” movement.

“My MAGA Republican friends don't seem to think it's a crisis,” Biden said Monday during a visit to Virginia's Prince William Forest Park, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) southwest Washington. “They actually want to repeal the Inflation Reduction Act, which provides the funding for the vast majority of these projects, and roll back protections for clean air and clean water.”

The president also used the trip to announce that nearly 2,000 corps positions are being offered across 36 states as part of his New Deal-style [*American Climate Corps green jobs training program*](https://apnews.com/article/biden-climate-corps-conservation-green-new-deal-d1ea0e218c8754b90f8446ad57aed689), including jobs offered in partnership with the North American Building Trades Unions.

Biden used executive action last year to create the American Climate Corps modeled on Roosevelt’s New Deal.

“You’ll get paid to fight climate change,” he said Monday.

Biden made the announcements in a shady spot in Prince William Forest Park, which was established in 1936 as a summer camp for underprivileged youth from Washington. That was part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Civilian Conservation Corps to help create jobs during the Great Depression.

The solar grants are being awarded by the Environmental Protection Agency, which unveiled the 60 recipients. The projects are expected to eventually reduce emissions by the equivalent of 30 million metric tons of carbon dioxide and save households $350 million annually.

Biden's announcements come as he is working to energize young voters for his reelection campaign. Young people were a key part of a broad but potentially fragile coalition that helped him defeat then-President [*Trump*](https://apnews.com/hub/donald-trump) in 2020. Some have [*joined protests*](https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-iftar-muslims-f321bb67c707184a1dcfd7ed7f71b65c) around the country of the administration's handling of Israel's war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

After his speech, Biden was asked by reporters about protests against Israel's handling of the war and replied, “I condemn the antisemitic protests.” But he also added, "I also condemn those who don’t understand what’s going on with the Palestinians.”

The White House issued a statement over the weekend denouncing "harassment and calls for violence against Jews.” [*Protests on college campuses*](https://apnews.com/article/columbia-yale-israel-palestinians-protests-56c3d9d0a278c15ed8e4132a75ea9599), including those of Columbia and Yale Universities, prompted scores of arrests.

Biden's campaign is hoping that his climate efforts can energize young voters ahead of November. Senior administration officials said young Americans are keenly invested in the Biden climate agenda and want to help enact it and that the Climate Corps is a way to do so.

Solar energy [*is gaining traction*](https://apnews.com/article/solar-wind-batteries-clean-energy-fossil-fuels-3bbcbc555b6ff2af27e0ceeb76eb782e) as a key renewable energy source that could reduce the nation’s reliance on fossil fuels. Not only is it clean, but solar energy can also boost the reliability of the electric grid.

But solar energy can have high costs for initial installation, making it inaccessible for many Americans — and potentially meaning a mingling of environmental policy with election-year ***politics***.

Forty-nine of the new grants are state-level awards, six serve Native American tribes and five are multi-state awards. They can be used for investments such as rooftop solar and community solar gardens.

“Broad community-based solar is our brightest hope for protecting people and our climate from the scourge of fossil fuels," said Jean Su, director of the Energy Justice program at the Center for Biological Diversity. “These targeted investments mean low-income families get clean energy that is affordable, resilient and protects our ecosystems. It’s great to see President Biden jumpstart this landmark program.”

The president has often used Earth Day as a backdrop to further his administration's climate initiatives. Last year, he signed an executive order creating the White House Office of Environmental Justice, meant to help ensure that poverty, race and ethnic status do not lead to worse exposure to pollution and environmental harm.

He has tried to draw a contrast with GOP congressional leaders, who have called for less regulation of oil production to lower energy prices. Biden officials counter that GOP policies benefit highly profitable oil companies and could ultimately undermine U.S. efforts to compete with the Chinese in the renewable energy sector.

The new awards came from the [*Solar for All program*](https://www.epa.gov/greenhouse-gas-reduction-fund/solar-all), part of the $27 billion “green bank” created as part of a sweeping [*climate law*](https://apnews.com/article/technology-science-congress-climate-and-environment-f084d23d61ebb068068d4aa92c82fdbb) passed in 2022. The bank is intended to reduce climate and air pollution and send money to neighborhoods most in need, especially disadvantaged and low-income communities disproportionately affected by climate change.

Among those receiving grants are state projects to provide solar-equipped roofs for homes, college residences and residential-serving community solar projects in West Virginia, a non-profit operating Mississippi solar lease program and solar workforce training initiatives in South Carolina.

The [*taxpayer-funded green bank has faced Republican opposition*](https://apnews.com/article/climate-change-energy-oil-biden-republican-congress-b2d799a4b69dec464afb906c14f938d2) and concerns over accountability for how the money gets used. EPA previously disbursed [*the other $20 billion of the bank’s funds*](https://apnews.com/article/epa-billions-clean-green-energy-community-grants-8f6c76cb41783a5e838ac4f7f7cce086) to nonprofits and community development banks for clean energy projects such as residential heat pumps, additional energy-efficient home improvements and larger-scale projects like electric vehicle charging stations and community cooling centers.

Sens. Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Ed Markey of Oregon spoke at Monday's event along with New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, all leading voices in the progressive wing of the Democratic Party. Ocasio Cortez referenced “peaceful protests” elsewhere while arguing, “It was the power of young people who have made today possible."

\_\_\_

St. John reported from Detroit.

\_\_\_

Alexa St. John is an Associated Press climate solutions reporter. Follow her on X, formerly Twitter, [*@alexa\_stjohn*](https://twitter.com/alexa_stjohn). Reach her at [*ast.john@ap.org*](mailto:ast.john@ap.org).

\_\_\_

The Associated Press’ climate and environmental coverage receives financial support from multiple private foundations. AP is solely responsible for all content. Find AP’s [*standards*](https://www.ap.org/about/standards-for-working-with-outside-groups/) for working with philanthropies, a list of supporters and funded coverage areas at [*AP.org*](https://www.ap.org/discover/Supporting-AP).

**Load-Date:** April 22, 2024

**End of Document**