

# [***The issue on which Biden and Trump are furthest apart***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6C0D-7HF1-JBSS-S005-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; It is not news that former President Donald Trump wants to hit rewind on President Joe Biden's climate policy. What is news is how far Trump may go.

There's [*new reporting in The Washington Post*](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2024/05/09/trump-oil-industry-campaign-money/) that Trump, during a meeting at Mar-a-Lago, asked oil executives to raise $1 billion for his campaign so that he could upend efforts by Bidento push the US toward clean energy and electric vehicles.

While the transactional nature of the pitch, as relayed to the Post, is overt and somewhat shocking, it's not out of step with Trump's view of ***politics*** or his insistence that climate change is a "hoax." For evidence that climate change is not a hoax, [*read this CNN story*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/18/climate/ocean-heat-record-year-climate-intl/index.html) about ocean temperatures. Or [*look at the pictures*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/05/02/climate/mass-fish-die-off-vietnam-intl-scli/index.html) of hundreds of thousands of dead fish killed by a heat wave in Vietnam.

I talked to CNN climate reporter [*Ella Nilsen*](https://www.cnn.com/profiles/ella-nilsen) about Trump's plans for a second term and Biden's record on climate change. Among the interesting things I learned is that a lot of the money Biden and Democrats have spent to spur manufacturing has gone to red states.

What would climate policy look like under Trump?

**WOLF:** The Washington Post reports that Trump is promising oil executives a friendly administration if they raise $1 billion for his campaign. [*Politico*](https://www.politico.com/news/2024/05/08/oil-industry-orders-trump-day-one-00156705) reports the oil industry is crafting executive orders Trump could sign on day one. Trump has promised - in his "dictator for a day" fantasy - to act on immigration and energy production first. What do we know about how different US energy policy would be under Trump?

**NILSEN:** In his first term, Trump overturned more than 100 environmental rules and actions put in place by the Obama administration.

Biden's administration has spent much of its tenure undoing Trump's actions - in some places enacting even stronger regulations on planet-warming pollution coming from [*vehicles*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/20/climate/epa-biden-electric-cars/index.html), [*power plants*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/25/climate/biden-epa-power-plant-rule-climate/index.html) and the [*oil and gas*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/02/climate/cop28-methane-announcement-climate/index.html) industry.

Trump has vowed to again reverse course from Biden; he wants to give a boost to fossil fuels and oil and gas drilling in particular.

A mixed view of Biden

**WOLF:** For all their rhetorical differences on climate, it's not like the US has cut oil production under Biden. In fact, the US remains the No. 1 world oil producer by a long shot. How do climate activists rate the current administration?

**NILSEN**: Climate activists have a mixed view of Biden.

On the one hand, he delivered on the most [*ambitious piece*](https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/28/politics/climate-deal-joe-manchin/index.html) of climate legislation in modern history. His administration has also finalized some pretty ambitious regulations cutting planet-warming pollution, conserved a lot of public lands and created an American Climate Corps - a key demand of activists.

On the other hand, the administration greenlit [*the massive new oil drilling project*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/03/13/politics/willow-project-alaska-oil-biden-approval-climate/index.html) in Alaska known as Willow, which galvanized a huge amount of opposition from youth climate groups and on social media. Youth climate groups want Biden [*to use executive authority*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/05/politics/joe-biden-climate-emergency-2024/index.html) to stop drilling for fossil fuels - something that likely won't happen as [*oil and gas production booms*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/08/09/business/oil-production-biden-trump/index.html) in the US.

Are we seeing payoff for all that climate spending Democrats enacted under Biden?

**WOLF:** The money for climate in the [*Inflation Reduction Act*](https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/15/politics/biden-build-back-better-manchin/index.html), which was backed by Democrats only, was sold as the largest-ever investment in clean energy and climate policy. Are we seeing it pay off?

**NILSEN:** Yes, so far. The IRA has already spurred hundreds of billions of dollars of investment in new US manufacturing, largely for clean-energy industries like EVs, battery plants, and solar and wind production.

A lot of this funding has been clustered in red states, but other 2024 swing states like Michigan, Arizona and Georgia have been big benefactors.

Why is the funding clustered in red states?

**WOLF:** Is that a political move, or does it just have to do with the fact that it gets windy in Texas?

**NILSEN:** You're right, it's very windy in a lot of red states - red states like Texas, Oklahoma, Iowa and South Dakota are big wind-energy producers and consumers.

But there are other reasons too. For instance, it's easier to permit and build in some red states, and others have relaxed union labor laws, another factor that draws big businesses.

A third of US emissions are from one sector

**WOLF:** I've been seeing a lot of stories about a backlash to EVs. Trump falsely says Biden wants to ban gas-powered vehicles. How big a part does a transition to EVs play in addressing climate change?

**NILSEN:** The vehicles we drive play a huge role in addressing climate change.

Transportation emissions account for a little less than a third of total US emissions - the biggest individual sector for greenhouse gas pollution.

Even accounting for mining for the critical minerals needed for EV batteries, EVs [*are much cleaner*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/10/climate/hybrids-evs-toyota-climate-impact-int/index.html) than gas-powered vehicles - assuming the power used to charge them is also coming from clean sources.

Can states pick up the slack if the federal government turns on climate policy?

**WOLF:** Even before Biden took office, states like California were taking the lead in a more climate-focused energy policy. Would that continue even if Trump wins?

**NILSEN:** Yes, blue states like California and Washington state and even some Midwestern, purple states like Michigan and Minnesota have passed some very ambitious climate laws through their legislatures. That work will continue in the states even if Trump is elected.

But given how quickly we're running out of time to get the planet's warming under control, it will be important to have the federal government moving in that direction as well.

What is happening in Congress?

**WOLF:** Better than presidents taking executive action or the Environmental Protection Agency writing a regulation to address the climate would be lawmakers passing a major piece of climate legislation. Are there any indications of movement toward a new national energy policy?

**NILSEN:** Lawmakers passing the IRA was a huge achievement in its own right; however, multiple lawmakers have said the IRA was just the start.

Given the 2017 Trump tax cuts are expiring soon, and Congress will have to take up tax policy in 2025, there's already chatter about a possible carbon tax, or a carbon tariff on polluting products like cement and steel, coming up in the legislature.

Of course, what's possible in Congress depends tremendously on which party is in power - and who is in the White House.

Analysis by Zachary B. Wolf

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