



Combating Climate Change with Sunshine and Fuzzy Math

By Katie Tubb
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The White House yesterday released a [list](#) of executive actions to “[combat climate change](#)” with “solar deployment and energy efficiency” regulations that promise to cut 300 million tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions by 2030 and allegedly billions from electricity bills. For the most part, the list doesn’t consist of anything new or grand but is a collection of actions the Obama Administration and the private sector were already doing and which will have as good as zero impact on global temperatures.

On the list are a number of initiatives that don’t appear to cut any CO₂ emissions: solar job training on several military bases, a Website for federal solar energy resources and data, an updated guide to federal financing tools, four government studies, a roundtable discussion on increasing access to capital for solar projects, and a business plan competition.

Another item on the list will cost taxpayers a pretty penny. The Department of Agriculture will award \$68 million in loans and grants to renewable energy and efficiency projects on farms, ranches, and rural small businesses. Why these continued investments/subsidies are necessary is unclear, considering that one of the aforementioned [government studies found](#) that installation prices for residential and commercial solar projects continued a “precipitous decline in 2013” even as state and local utility cash incentives have fallen 85–95 percent over the past decade. The cost of utility-scale project installation has also fallen 40 percent since 2007.

Others “deployments” on the list will cut carbon dioxide emissions. The White House announced energy-efficiency regulations for commercial air conditioners and new commercial and residential building code standards by the Department of Energy (DOE). Allegedly these have and will continue to cut millions of CO₂ emissions and save homes and businesses billions of dollars on energy bills. But not for free.

Americans make energy-efficiency decisions [all the time](#) and invest in efficiency upgrades [when it makes sense](#) for their unique circumstances and goals. In calling for new efficiency regulations, the DOE prioritizes energy efficiency over other preferences customers and businesses might have—safety, size, performance, or price, to name a few. Not only does this limit customer choice, but it’s likely that the regulations will increase up-front costs for customers. Manufacturers will have to divert investments to meet government compliance, regardless of whether customers want to pay for that or not.

But to what end? Many Americans would [like](#) to lose weight, but that at least has the benefits of improved health, more energy, and personal satisfaction. The Obama Administration fails to explain what exactly will be accomplished by preventing 300 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions.

Climatologists at the Cato Institute [modeled](#) the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) proposed rule to cut CO₂ emissions from the electricity sector 30 percent by 2030, or [750 million tons](#) worth. Using U.N. assumptions about emissions and warming and a model created in part by the EPA, they found that it would only impact global temperatures (allegedly the problem we are trying to solve) by 0.018 degrees Celsius by the year 2100. The impact that cutting 300 million tons would have on temperatures is far less.

While the White House wages war on climate change, American freedoms and common sense are casualties.