

Obama Doubles Down On Global Warming Pledge — 80% Decarbonization By 2050

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November 16, 2016

The White House has released a lengthy 111-page report detailing its plan to cut greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by 2050, doubling down on President Barack Obama's global warming pledge to the United Nations.

The report comes as Obama prepares to hand over the reins of power to President-elect Donald Trump, a Republican who's promised to roll back federal global warming regulations, which are major parts of Obama's legacy.

Trump also promised to "cancel" the UN Paris climate agreement, effectively nullifying Obama's international global warming efforts.

"The United States [mid-century strategy] charts a path that is achievable, consistent with the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement, and an acceleration of existing market trends," reads the White House report, released Wednesday.

"It will require increasingly ambitious decarbonization policies and support for continued innovation," reads the report. "The pace of emissions reductions will need to double after 2020 to achieve the 2025 target, and the United States will need to sustain that accelerated pace through 2050."

The report claims the U.S. can meet this ambitious goal by cutting energy waste and using greener methods for generating electricity and powering vehicles.

Officials say, for example, that "nearly all fossil fuel electricity production can be replaced by low carbon technologies, including renewables, nuclear, and fossil fuels or bioenergy combined with carbon capture, utilization and storage."

The White House also said "carbon pricing" was a "key priority" for future administrations to push emissions down even further. That means carbon taxes or cap-and-trade systems, which could increase energy prices.

"Carbon pricing will enable cost-effective emission reductions through market forces that encourage the development and deployment of the most cost-effective low carbon solutions across the economy," the White House reported.

It added “the United States will need complementary policies as well, including programs and standards that encourage cost-effective energy efficiency improvements and infrastructure investments that support the emergence of low carbon solutions.”

But the White House report may be overly optimistic. The report neglects to mention the key regulatory measure to cut CO2 emissions from power plants is being challenged in the courts, and that Trump has pledged to roll back many climate rules.

Political problems aside, Cato Institute climate scientist Chip Knappenberger said economic realities also make Obama’s climate plans unrealistic.

“Add to the mix energy efficiency measures which don’t work as well as advertised, low gas prices and a growing economy that is still tightly linked to fossil fuels, and you arrive at the unimpeachable conclusion that we are not going to come close to meeting the emissions pledges made by the president,” Knappenberger wrote in Newsweek in April.

“Even the recently extended green subsidies for wind and solar, which may slow the bleeding in the short term, come up far short in producing the greenhouse gas emissions reduction necessary to reach our target by 2025,” he wrote.

To complicate matters, Obama’s plan to cut emissions 80 percent will have little, if any, effect on projected global temperature rise. The Cato Institute’s climate model (based on federal climate models) shows Obama’s plan would only cut projected warming by a little over one-tenth of one degree Celsius.