

White House Aides Huddle To Discuss Breaking A Trump Campaign Promise

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Top White House officials will meet Thursday to discuss whether or not to break President Donald Trump's campaign promise to "cancel" the Paris agreement on global warming.

Competing Trump administration factions will debate behind closed doors on the merits of pulling out or staying in the deal. Trump is expected to make a decision by the end of May on whether or not to ditch the Paris agreement, which the Obama administration brokered.

As White House officials meet, voices on both sides of the issue have made last-minute overtures to bolster their arguments.

The Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI) launched a second ad campaign encouraging Trump to keep his promise to pull out of the Paris agreement. CEI is one of many conservative groups who oppose the agreement.

"Failure to withdraw from the Paris Climate Treaty will make President Trump's plans to undo Obama's climate agenda vulnerable to legal challenges," said Myron Ebell, CEI's director of energy and environment policy, who also headed Trump's EPA transition team.

"The President should not listen to Washington's Swamp, but rather keep his campaign promise to get the United States out of the Paris Climate Treaty and send it to the Senate for a vote," Ebell said.

The Wall Street Journal's editorial board joined the fray, calling on Trump to exit the Paris agreement. WSJ argues staying in the agreement "risks Trump's energy plans."

White House chief strategist Steve Bannon and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt are the leading "exit" voices in the Trump administration.

Paris agreement opponents say it leaves the U.S. vulnerable to environmentalist lawsuits and activist international courts. They also say it adds weight to global warming alarmism that could strangle the U.S. economy.

"The real reason for pulling of the Paris Accord is that it is a futile gesture based on empty and dishonest premises," wrote Ross McKittrick, an economist at Canada's University of Guelph and an adjunct scholar at the libertarian Cato Institute.

“Pulling out of the Paris treaty would send a signal that the U.S. will not bind itself to bad deals based on hype and empty slogans,” McKittrick wrote. “If this is the best global climate diplomacy could come up with then it is time to pursue other options.”

White House aides George David Banks and Jared Kushner head the “remain” faction, joined by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Energy secretary Rick Perry. They want to stay in the Paris agreement to keep diplomatic leverage.

Tillerson’s State Department recently released a memo detailing the U.S. options for the Paris agreement. The memo, obtained by Bloomberg, basically supports Tillerson’s case for remaining in Paris.

The “remain” camp seems to favor staying in the Paris agreement, but weakening the pledge Obama made to the United Nations to cut greenhouse gas emissions 26 to 28 percent by 2025.

North Dakota Republican Rep. Kevin Cramer, Trump’s energy advisor on the campaign trail, has been one of the most vocal supporters of this option. He sent a letter to the White House carrying signatures of eight lawmakers urging Trump to go this route.

Cramer’s position has been backed by coal producer Cloud Peak Energy. The company sent a letter to the White House in early April urging Trump to stay in the deal and leverage the opportunity to push subsidies for clean coal technology.

Cloud Peak joins a slew of other corporations, from Apple to ExxonMobil, who support remaining in the Paris deal. Multinationals, like Exxon, want to avoid diplomatic blowback, and the oil industry no doubt sees Paris as boon to natural gas holdings.

ExxonMobil sent a letter to Banks in March in favor of staying in the Paris deal. BP, Royal Dutch Shell and ConocoPhillips are among those who support remaining party to the Paris agreement.

White House officials were supposed to meet April 18 to discuss the Paris agreement, but that meeting was postponed at the last-minute.