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As liberal policies mount, GOP attack lines against Biden come into view

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President Biden's new administration has become a target-rich environment for Republicans as he and congressional Democrats embark on an ambitious liberal agenda.

Biden spent the last week on a tour to promote his recently signed \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package, dubbed the American Rescue Plan. But he will soon turn the page to tax increases, legalization of illegal immigrants amid a border crisis, and an infrastructure package that will contain some controversial elements.

Republicans are already putting this together in a case against the president and the Democrats' small congressional majorities.

"Biden is putting on a masterclass for what NOT to do at the border," Tommy Pigott, the Republican National Committee's rapid response director, said in a statement. "It is a complete and total failure of leadership and American communities are left paying the price."

GOP groups also seized on White House press secretary Jen Psaki's revelation that the \$400,000 threshold for tax increases under Biden's plan will apply to "families," not individuals.

"Just as Americans are starting to recover from the pandemic, President Biden wants to raise taxes and then lies about who it will impact," America Rising PAC deputy press secretary Whitney Robertson said in a statement.

Psaki told reporters at a White House daily briefing that the tax increase would still only affect 2% of households. But the tax hikes come at the same time congressional Democrats, led by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, press for restoring one of the tax breaks former President Donald Trump ended: the cap on state and local tax deductions, which hits the blue-state professional class especially hard.

All parts of the conservative coalition have begun to mobilize against Biden, who promised during last year's campaign to govern as a bipartisan deal-maker and centrist. He has occasionally rebuffed the left wing of the Democratic Party on staffing or procedural questions concerning the proposed \$15 an hour federal minimum wage or how far he is willing to go on filibuster reform.

But Biden has proved to be no obstacle to the far-reaching election regulations bill H.R. 1 or the expansive Equality Act, which some religious nonprofit organizations fear will ensnare them in costly litigation over LGBT issues. Social conservatives have also pilloried the administration on

abortion, especially as Xavier Becerra was narrowly confirmed to oversee the Department of Health and Human Services.

“From day one the Biden-Harris administration has pushed a radical and deeply unpopular agenda on abortion,” Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the anti-abortion group Susan B. Anthony List, said in a statement. “On the very same day Xavier Becerra — a notoriously eager pro-abortion advocate — is confirmed to lead HHS, the agency announces plans to rewrite Title X and force taxpayers to fund the abortion industry. President Trump’s Protect Life Rule sought to honor both the plain statutory language and the will of Americans of all stripes who oppose using taxpayer dollars to fund abortion on demand.”

Even one of Biden’s potentially bipartisan initiatives could arouse conservative opposition.

“Biden plans to use his infrastructure package as a Trojan horse for vast array of green and labor union mandates,” said Chris Edwards, director of tax policy studies at the libertarian Cato Institute. “Biden is obsessed with labor unions: His campaign statement on infrastructure and clean energy highlights unions 32 times. His support of the Protecting the Right to Organize Act would gut right-to-work reforms put into place in the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act, so he wants to wind the clock back on labor relations not just to the 1960s but the 1930s.”

“The more like the Green New Deal it is, the fewer Republicans will vote for it,” Tom Schatz of the conservative Citizens Against Government Waste said of the pending \$2 trillion infrastructure bill.

Republicans are also waiting to see sweeping climate action from the White House.

“Biden's plans for environmental policies at joebiden.com appear more radical than Richard Nixon's,” said Edwards, editor of *Downsizing Government*.

None of these lines of attack are guaranteed to work. Many of them were regularly employed by Republicans last year, when Biden won the White House. There is always the risk that the GOP will look obstructionist.

“If we deal with the pandemic while getting people back to work and their kids back to school, they are going to notice it is Democrats doing that and Republicans trying to stop us,” a veteran Democratic strategist said.

Biden remains fairly popular, especially compared to Trump, despite the border situation and party-line votes in Congress. House Democrats had a record fundraising haul last month for this early in the midterm election cycle. But the president’s numbers aren’t so strong that they could take much slippage without threatening the small Democratic majorities. It wouldn’t take Republican gains as large as 1994 or 2010 to capture Congress.

In the meantime, Republicans will keep hammering away at the material Biden gives them.