

News

Obama tackles wide-ranging agenda; results mixed Deficit growing while energy plan takes shape

By [The Associated Press](#)

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WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama has not yet achieved the big campaign promises he'll be judged on years from now, on health care, war, the economy and so much more. It's early, it's a colossal load and Rome wasn't built in 100 days. He has delivered, though, on the work ethic he outlined back when his Republican presidential rival challenged him to suspend campaign events and confront the financial crisis. "You know," he said then, "presidents are going to have to deal with more than one thing at a time." So he has.

Obama has moved ahead on the towering problem of health coverage, succeeding on the first baby steps, and has taken on still big-ticket items that other leaders might have mothballed in perilous times like these.

On foreign policy, energy and the environment, Obama the president is trying to do what Obama the candidate promised. No bait and switch here.

But he'll be judged on results, not effort.

Here's a look at Obama's progress on a sampling of his promises:

The deficit

THE PROMISE: "Every dollar I've proposed, I've proposed an additional cut that it matches."

THE PERFORMANCE: The nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget estimated that Obama's policy proposals would add a net \$428 billion to the deficit over four years. Now, the deficit is nearly quadrupling to \$1.75 trillion, and few independent analysts believe he can meet his goal of halving the deficit in five years.

Diplomacy

THE PROMISE: To pursue diplomacy with Iran and other hostile governments.

THE PERFORMANCE: Obama has offered dialogue to Tehran, made a video appealing to the Iranian people and included Iran in multinational discussions on Afghanistan. And he shook the hand of Hugo Chavez, the fiercely anti-American leader of Venezuela.

Education

THE PROMISE: Obama promised will fund No Child Left Behind and improve its assessments and accountability systems.

THE PERFORMANCE: The economic stimulus bill signed Feb. 17 includes \$25 billion for education improvements, including No Child Left Behind.

The promise: "When I'm president, we'll fight to make sure we're once again first in the world when it comes to high school graduation rates."

THE PERFORMANCE: This will be a work in progress for a long time. Obama's 2010 budget proposes new spending aimed at keeping at-risk kids in school.

Energy and environment

THE PROMISE: "I will set a hard cap on all carbon emissions at a level that scientists say is necessary to curb global warming — an 80 percent reduction by 2050. To ensure this isn't just talk, I will also commit to interim targets toward this goal in 2020, 2030 and 2040. These reductions will start immediately."

THE PERFORMANCE: The president's proposed budget would put the U.S. on his promised path.

Ethics and open government

THE PROMISE: "When you walk into my administration, you will not be able to work on regulations or contracts directly related to your former employer for two years. And when you leave, you will not be able to lobby the administration throughout the remainder of my term in office." In November 2007, he said of lobbyists: "When I am president, they won't find a job in my White House."

THE PERFORMANCE: Obama imposed strict rules barring registered lobbyists from working for him for two years after their registrations expire. But once in office he devised a waiver that would allow exceptions for "uniquely qualified individuals," including Raytheon lobbyist William Lynn, Obama's No. 2 Pentagon official.

THE PROMISE: "As president, Obama will not sign any nonemergency bill without giving the American public an opportunity to review and comment on the White House Web site for five days."

THE PERFORMANCE: Poor, starting with his first bill, a nonemergency measure giving workers more time to take their pay discrimination cases to court. No more than two days passed before it became law. Only one bill in the first 11 was posted online for five days after it cleared Congress and before Obama signed it, the Cato Institute found.

Similar pledges to give the public more insight into decision-making have yet to bear fruit, such as one to disclose all communications between the White House and outside groups concerning regulatory policymaking. Obama is also preserving Bush-era secrecy surrounding dozens of FBI databases containing personal information about Americans and

foreigners.

On the other hand, Obama strengthened access to government records under the Freedom of Information Act.

Health care

THE PROMISE: Obama pledged to "invest \$10 billion a year over the next five years to move the U.S. health care system to broad adoption of standards-based electronic health information systems, including electronic health records."

THE PERFORMANCE: The Feb. 17 stimulus law included \$19 billion to modernize health information technology, most of it spread over five years.