

GlobalPost.com

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June 26, 2013

<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/science/global-warming/130625/obama-climate-change-record-environmental-legacy-timeline-policies>

Timeline: President Obama's record on climate change

While US President Barack Obama campaigned as an environmental progressive, his record has been inconsistent. GlobalPost examines the history.

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U.S. President Barack Obama speaks as he unveils his plan on climate change June 25, 2013 at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. President Obama laid out his plan to diminish carbon pollution and prepare the country for the impacts of climate change. (Alex Wong/AFP/Getty Images)

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US President Barack Obama announced his new climate change initiative Tuesday at Georgetown University, the first step in what the White House hopes will be a concerted effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and develop green energy technology. He ordered the

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to establish carbon emission standards for power plants and expand the production of renewable energy on federal lands and low-income housing sites.

In a [video](#) released by the White House on June 22, the president referred to climate change as a “serious challenge” that can only be solved through the joint efforts of Americans from all sectors of the economy.

Environmental groups have criticized Obama for not following up on many of his 2008 presidential campaign promises to combat the threat of climate change. A recent surge in severe weather, which some scientists attribute to climate change, has prompted many Americans to criticize the administration for its perceived inaction.

The Obama administration contends it has implemented wide-ranging environmental reforms that have gone unnoticed by the public. It points to gas mileage, green energy investment, and offshore drilling as examples of issues Obama has tackled since taking office.

Of particular concern to environmentalists is the proposed Keystone XL pipeline, which the Obama administration appears to tacitly support. Obama [said](#) Tuesday he would approve the pipeline as long as it “does not significantly exacerbate the problem of carbon pollution.”

Although Obama has consistently sought to position himself on the side of environmentalists, his efforts to maintain a broad political coalition — and to keep energy prices low — has left him with some strange bedfellows.

To provide some context, here’s a look at some of the major climate change proposals Obama has authored during his tenure:

Jan. 26, 2009: Less than a week after being sworn in for his first term, Obama issued two Presidential Memoranda, which he [called](#) “the first steps on our journey toward energy independence.” The first directed the Department of Transportation to establish higher fuel efficiency standards for cars beginning in the 2011 model year toward the goal of 35 miles per gallon by 2020. The second directed over a dozen states — including California — to lower their tailpipe emissions well below the national average.

In his speech he stressed the need for Congress to act on this divisive issue: “The days of Washington dragging its heels are over,” he said, adding that “it will be the policy of my administration to reverse our dependence on foreign oil while building a new energy economy that will create millions of jobs.”

Feb. 10, 2009: Obama delayed a bill drafted by the Bush Administration that would have allowed drilling off of the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

Then-Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar [called](#) the move an attempt “to establish an orderly process that allows us make wise decisions based on sound information.” Though energy companies complained that oil drilling had become far safer in recent years, environmentalists praised the move as an important step toward preserving the safety of vital coastline.

In March of 2010, however, Obama reversed his stance, allowing some offshore drilling to be done along the Atlantic coastline. Environmentalists, enraged by this political about-face, [referred](#) to his action as a “wholesale assault” on the oceans.

Feb. 17, 2009: Mired in the depths of the Great Recession, the President signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, a massive \$800 billion stimulus aimed at jumpstarting the anemic US economy. Buried within the 400-page piece of legislation was an \$80 billion allotment for renewable and clean energy investment, making federal buildings more eco-friendly, improving the electricity grid, and supporting state and local clean energy investments. He also announced plans to weatherize middle-income homes, a move that he claimed would “save working families hundreds of dollars on their energy bills.”&amp;amp;amp;amp;amp;amp;amp;amp;amp;amp;amp;amp;lt;br /&amp;amp;amp;amp;amp;amp;amp;amp;amp;amp;gt;

May 19, 2009: In a move that complimented his memoranda from January, Obama enacted a set of stringent new rules aimed at creating a new fleet of cars and light trucks that would be about 40 percent more fuel efficient than their predecessors.

Automobile companies and environmentalists alike praised the move, calling it a long-overdue policy measure that could simultaneously synchronize national fuel standards while also decreasing emissions by a meaningful amount. Daniel Becker, the director of the safe climate campaign, [called](#) it “the single biggest step the American government has ever taken to cut greenhouse gas emissions.”

May 29, 2011: Following the catastrophic BP oil spill the month before, Obama extended a moratorium on issuing offshore drilling permits. Considered the worst oil spill in US history, the BP fiasco severely damaged the ecology of the Gulf Coast region and left much of the coastal economy in shambles. The moratorium was fiercely opposed by many congressional Republicans — culminating in the infamous “Drill, baby, drill” campaign.” Though they supported the premise, many environmentalists felt that Obama’s actions amounted to too little too late.

March 30, 2011: Much to the chagrin of many of his environmentalist allies, President Obama, in a visit to Georgetown University, outlined a new environmental plan that seemed to backtrack on many of his previous promises. In the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan, Obama continued to champion the use of nuclear power — though he did say he had “requested a comprehensive safety review by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission” for all US nuclear plants.

Jan. 20, 2013: Following an election season in which he was bombarded by bipartisan assaults on the efficacy of his environmental strategy, Obama spent much of his second inaugural address aggressively outlining the climate plan for his final four years in office. “Some may still deny the overwhelming judgment of science,” he said, “but none can avoid the devastating impact of raging fires, and crippling drought, and more powerful storms.”

Democrats at the time said Obama, eager to avoid some of the failures of his first term, would be more keen to sidestep the will of Congress, hinting that he would rely much more on executive orders to unilaterally achieve his climate goals.

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