



# Climate, politics demand Biden get tough on auto pollution

By Dan Becker, opinion contributor  
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[President Biden](#) was right when he said global warming is an existential threat. That's why it's so disappointing that his administration produced auto-pollution rules that are a speed bump on the road to the climate precipice, right when we need a U-turn.

The new auto rules the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [finalized](#) Monday wrapped anemic pollution reductions with tinsel and bows for the auto industry in the form of loopholes and giveaways.

The administration crowed about the rules being the [most ambitious](#) mileage goals ever. Yet, they only slightly improve on standards automakers [agreed to](#) nine years ago with [President Obama](#), when global warming was far less severe. Those [rules were reversed by President Trump](#) at the request of the car companies.

Among the loopholes, the new rules allow auto companies to make more gas-guzzling cars, pickups and SUVs if they include technologies like solar panels on car rooftops that don't significantly cut emissions.

Climate advocates always look for the good news. Even with power-plant emission cuts stymied as Biden's climate provisions in the Build Back Better bill languishes in the Senate and the weak short-term auto pollution rule, the president still has a chance to dramatically cut the nation's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. Biden's EPA is poised to begin writing the agency's next phase of standards for model year 2027 and beyond, to be enacted within the president's current term.

These long-term rules must dramatically speed the transition to a zero-emissions era with enforceable rules that force auto companies to build electric vehicles rather than just manufacture promises to make some someday.

With aggressive action on cars and trucks, Biden can avert both climate and political peril.

Voters who helped elect Biden — and who he'll need to win reelection — are among the most affected by and concerned about climate.

In the runup to the 2020 election, a [survey](#) by Yale and George Mason universities found that 57 percent of registered Black and Latino voters said global warming would be “very important” to their vote. “Climate change disproportionately affects members of disadvantaged communities and groups who face socioeconomic inequalities, including many people of color,” the study reported.

Building on Union of Concerned Scientists calculations, a joint Columbia University-Center for Public Integrity [study](#) found that in U.S. counties where Black people made up at least one-quarter of the population, temperatures topped 100 degrees Fahrenheit an average of 18 days a year, compared with roughly seven days annually in the rest of the country.

Arizona was a 2020 battleground that the Democratic presidential candidate won for the first time since 1996. The 4-to-1 edge Biden achieved in one of Phoenix's [poorest districts](#) allowed him to beat Trump in the state by roughly 10,500 votes, or 0.3 percent of the total vote — a [slimmer winning margin](#) than in any state other than Georgia.

[Polls show](#) young people care deeply about the climate. Among millennial and younger Democrats, another critically important constituency, 88 percent told [Pew Research Center pollsters](#) last year that the government was doing too little to reduce the effects of climate change. Their voting participation [increased dramatically](#) in 2020.

Together these groups supported Biden by substantial margins: 92 percent of Black non-Latino voters, 59 percent of Latino voters and 59 percent of voters aged 18 to 29 [voted for him](#).

The president can deliver for them. Adopting a strong rule slashing auto pollution, Biden could take the biggest single step any nation has taken to protect the planet and deliver on these essential voters' high-priority climate concerns.

The president owes them, and the world is at stake.

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