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Becker, who’s now working on climate issues for the Center for Biological Diversity, similarly lauded Biden’s latest move to hand Podesta the international portfolio.

Podesta “knows how the government works, he knows how the climate works, he knows the players, he knows the Congress. He's a very wise choice,” Becker said.

“When foreign governments deal with American envoys they want to know, ‘Is this someone who has the ear of the president?’” Becker said. “And with John Podesta, there's absolutely no doubt that he does.”

And Becker thinks Podesta will have no trouble handling the bigger portfolio. “He’s smart as shit,” Becker said.

John Podesta: Dems' go-to guy on climate, again

When Democrats have big climate jobs to fill, they call John Podesta.

BY: ROBIN BRAVENDER

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John Podesta has once again been tapped to manage climate change for a Democratic White House. Andrew Harnik/AP

GREENWIRE | Early in President Barack Obama's second term, senior environmental officials were heading for the exit just as the president — then free of concerns about how his climate policy would affect his reelection bid — leaned into a more aggressive climate agenda.

Obama's second White House climate adviser, Heather Zichal, had stepped down. Obama's Council on Environmental Quality Chair Nancy Sutley and her deputy, Gary Guzy, had also announced their plans to leave. Environmentalists were worried about what the exodus of White House officials meant for Obama's second-term push on climate.

They were thrilled to hear John Podesta — who was President Bill Clinton's chief of staff — was heading back to the White House to advise Obama and focus on climate change.

President Joe Biden swept Podesta back into the White House in 2022 to be the point person on rolling out the mammoth climate law known as the Inflation Reduction Act.

And now Biden is expanding Podesta's portfolio even further to include international climate policy when Biden's current climate envoy, John Kerry, departs, the White House announced this week.

"It's awesome," Carol Browner, Obama's first White House climate adviser and Clinton-era EPA administrator, said Thursday of Podesta taking on the international climate work.

"He's doing an amazing job on the IRA," Browner said. "There's still lots to be done under the IRA, but it all does interact — from the global perspective down to the community perspective. And no one knows that better than John."

Podesta, who founded the Center for American Progress think tank and managed Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign, is one of the best-connected Democrats in Washington.

“He comes with a lot of relationships and a lot of history,” Browner said.

Podesta will continue to manage the climate law shop Biden created for him in 2022, the Office on Clean Energy Innovation and Implementation. He’s also taking on a new title, White House chief of staff Jeff Zients announced Wednesday, as senior adviser to the president for international climate policy.

Handing the international climate portfolio to Podesta in the White House, rather than trying to fill Kerry’s role at the State Department, will further consolidate climate policy in a White House that’s already packed with senior climate officials, including the Climate Policy Office led by Ali Zaidi.

“They’ve worked together,” David Hayes, a former climate official in the Biden White House, said of the White House teams led by Podesta, Zaidi and the aides focused on rolling out the infrastructure law.

Putting Podesta on the job also appears to allow the Biden White House to skirt a thorny Senate confirmation fight to replace Kerry at the State Department. A [provision in a defense bill](#) enacted last year requires special envoys appointed by the president to receive Senate confirmation.

Tacking international climate policy onto Podesta’s existing job won’t be easy, Browner said.

“Any time you're talking about climate change, any time you're talking about the biggest industrial revolution in our lives, it's going to be hard. It just is, but he's up to it,” she said.

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