

MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties
FR: Joe Bonfiglio, EDF Action
DT: April 24, 2020
RE: Climate and Clean Energy in the Presidential Race Moving Forward

Overview

Having solidified the Democratic nomination, Joe Biden's campaign has the challenge of dealing not only with a current news cycle dominated by the coronavirus, but simultaneously developing a general election campaign that runs through the convention and into the fall. While the contrast between a competent, empathetic leader (Biden) and the president, who has neither of those attributes, will be front-and-center, the Biden campaign must also illustrate a positive policy agenda. That agenda must appeal across the Democratic Party and to swing voters – and demonstrate that he has a smart, effective plan to lead America's economic recovery. Clean energy and climate can and should be a central part of a positive agenda that helps Joe Biden win the White House in 2020.

Key Points

- 1) *Climate and clean energy can help unify the Democratic coalition.*
Polling has shown repeatedly that Democratic primary voters cared deeply about climate change in 2020. EDF Action polling, done in conjunction with Center for American Progress and the League of Conservation Voters, showed [action on climate change](#) followed only health care as a priority issue across the early primary/caucus states. Critically, climate has proved to be a top issue for [Democrats under 35](#) and for [Latino voters](#). That remains true even during the coronavirus crisis.
- 2) *Climate and clean energy can help pull in swing voters.*
President Trump has already tried to [soften his rhetoric](#) on climate change, recognizing its importance to swing voters in places like Florida. We cannot let him run away from his record or past comments. [Our research shows](#) that his “hoax” language is a serious vulnerability with swing voters. Research [from progressive allies](#) has shown that concern is more salient now as the public is more open to a message that highlights the recklessness of ignoring science. At the same time, unlike some other important issues, [evidence shows](#) that embracing a strong climate position creates little to no blowback from voters.
- 3) *Climate and clean energy fits neatly with a response to the Covid-19 health and economic crisis.*
In the near-term, voters will rightly, be concerned with policies that solve the immediate health and economic crisis. But in the months ahead, we can expect that attention will broaden to additional stimulus and healthcare solutions. There is [early evidence that suggests](#) air pollution may make coronavirus more dangerous, which shows the link between public health and clean energy solutions. On the economic front, federal investment in clean energy infrastructure is a smart way to stimulate the economy in a sustainable way. Biden should show that he'll create

the jobs of the future, rebuilding in a way that is good for our kids and our health. Everyone wants more jobs and less pollution, and those can be the guideposts for national policy. Just as in the 2009 stimulus package that Vice President Biden led, clean energy can be a piece of the program that's focused on a better, stronger recovery, which builds a more resilient and prosperous future.

- 4) *Climate and clean energy will be part of the campaign—the question is whether it will be on Biden's terms or Trump's terms.*

[EDF Action polling](#) shows that the type of false attacks that conservative Super PACs have run on the Green New Deal can be effective. But our battleground polling shows that voters want aggressive action on climate and respond well when candidates define themselves early on this critical issue.

- 5) *Don't take our word for it, follow the swing state Governors.*

No one knows state politics like the Governors and, across the country, presidential swing state Governors are taking action on climate. Democratic Governors like [Tom Wolf in Pennsylvania](#), [Governor Cooper in North Carolina](#), [Tim Walz in Minnesota](#) have all been outspoken on the issue. But Republican governors like [Ron DeSantis in Florida](#) and [Doug Ducey in Arizona](#) have also felt the need to acknowledge the issue.

We have no doubt that a Biden Administration will work hard to advance action on climate change and clean energy. To get to the White House—and defeat Donald Trump—he should embrace the issue early and often during the campaign.