

United States Senate

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President-Elect
Office of the President Elect
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20230

December 19, 2020

Dear President-Elect Biden,

The Biden-Harris campaign ran on the boldest climate platform in presidential election history, establishing ambitious climate action as a foundational issue for your incoming Administration. For climate action to be a day-one priority, however, the work cannot wait until January 20, 2021—it must begin now as you determine your personnel appointments. We applaud the clear emphasis that your transition team has already placed on climate action and on climate justice, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that your Administration delivers on this essential call to action. The process of assembling the team needed to put campaign commitments into motion is already underway, with an early announcement of former Secretary of State John Kerry as the incoming special presidential envoy for climate change, the appointment of former Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy as the senior advisor on climate change, and other high-level placements. Endowed with a mandate from more than 78 million voters, your incoming Administration must provide those new officials with the staff, budget, and coordinating power needed supercharge the federal fight against the existential threat of climate change, in a way that also catalyzes and empowers local and state initiatives.

First, the coordination required to tackle a problem of this scale will mean that you must structure your incoming Administration in a way that prioritizes addressing the climate crisis at each level of the federal government. Your Administration should adopt the approach of past mobilizations against major national threats, just as the Roosevelt Administration did to coordinate the Executive Branch during World War II. To complement Secretary Kerry's work on the global stage and to facilitate Administrator McCarthy's domestic climate agenda, your Administration should create an overarching entity that reports directly to the president and is endowed with all the powers necessary to coordinate a national climate strategy across all federal departments and agencies. To deliver on your campaign promises to repair historic harms and ensure that climate solutions leave no communities behind, we also urge you to follow through on commitments to restore and elevate the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council and White House Environmental Justice Interagency Council. Newly empowered offices that focus on economic transition and on reinvesting in and decarbonizing domestic manufacturing and industry will be critical for protecting and creating millions of new, good-paying American

jobs and supporting workers and communities as we develop the national shift to a clean energy economy.

We stand with your Administration on the inclusion of climate justice as a cornerstone component of its plan for national economic renewal, as the revitalization of our economy cannot be divorced from the goal of climate justice for historically marginalized and overburdened communities. As climate change and environmental justice are intersectional issues that affect every aspect of American lives, your Administration should prioritize the appointment of personnel who embody or reflect the values and experiences of those active in acknowledging and combating the climate crisis. This includes members of underrepresented and environmental justice communities and climate scientists and experts. It should also include personnel with a deep commitment to ensuring that climate action supports communities and workers through the creation and support of family-sustaining jobs. At a minimum, personnel of the Biden administration must be independent of fossil fuel and polluter interests and commit to tackling the crisis at the scale and speed demanded by both science and justice.

As they work to restore the United States as a global force for climate action, Secretary Kerry and Administrator McCarthy must be supported by a strong team of allies throughout the Executive Branch. Within cabinet-level departments and agencies, the Administration should continue to appoint senior officials dedicated to addressing the climate crisis. To appropriately assess, address, and mitigate the costs of the climate crisis to the U.S. economy, the Administration should ensure that climate-focused personnel are given authority within key economic agencies and offices, such as the Department of Treasury, the Office of Management and Budget, the United States Trade Representative, and the National Economic Council and others. Additionally, your Administration should establish new divisions and offices that focus on specific climate and environmental justice issues, such as an Environmental and Climate Justice division in the Department of Justice, an Office of Climate Change and Health Equity in HHS, and an Office of Climate Resiliency at the Department of Agriculture.

Your campaign committed to taking broad federal climate action that recognizes the cross-cutting nature of the problem—a task that will require the establishment of these new executive offices, councils, task forces, and other entities, backed by the might of the federal government. These entities need to be empowered, fully funded, and supported by staff who have the experience, passion, and ethics necessary to take action with the scope and urgency that we need. This means that even personnel in traditionally non-climate posts should be knowledgeable about domestic and international climate policy and politics, so that in all agency rulemaking proceedings, budget-setting, and program implementation, climate change and equity concerns are centered and grounded in the latest science.

We must fight boldly for intersectional climate solutions that move the nation toward clean, renewable energy and incorporate ambitious climate, health, labor, and equity standards at a scale commensurate with the crisis. We encourage your transition team to continue its work toward developing an empowered, organized, diverse, and unified team to achieve the

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campaign's strong climate goals—building an Administration that recognizes the gravity of the crisis and possesses the passion and energy needed to address it.

Sincerely,

/s/ Edward J. Markey

Edward J. Markey

United States Senator

/s/ Richard Blumenthal

Richard Blumenthal

United States Senator

/s/ Martin Heinrich

Martin Heinrich

United States Senator

/s/ Jeffrey A. Merkley

Jeffrey A. Merkley

United States Senator

/s/ Kirsten Gillibrand

Kirsten Gillibrand

United States Senator