

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

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May 10, 2021

The Honorable Gina McCarthy  
National Climate Advisor  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, District of Columbia 20500

Dear Ms. McCarthy:

As members of the Subcommittee on Environment of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, we write to learn more about the Administration's greenhouse gas reduction target and how it impacts American jobs and our economy.

As you know, on April 22, 2021, President Joe Biden announced the submission of the United States' nationally determined contribution to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC),<sup>1</sup> in accordance with Article 4 of the Paris Agreement.<sup>2</sup> In doing so, President Biden established an emissions reduction target of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by 50 to 52 percent below 2005 levels in 2030.<sup>3</sup>

This admittedly "bold" and "ambitious"<sup>4</sup> pledge nearly doubles the commitment made under the Paris Agreement by the Obama Administration.<sup>5</sup> The announcement of this standard sparks serious concerns, such as those about feasibility, loss of jobs, grid reliability, and access

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<sup>1</sup>THE WHITE HOUSE, *Fact Sheet: President Biden Sets 2030 Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Target Aimed at Creating Good-Paying Union Jobs and Securing U.S. Leadership on Clean Energy Technologies*, Apr. 22, 2021, [hereinafter *White House Fact Sheet*] <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/04/22/fact-sheet-president-biden-sets-2030-greenhouse-gas-pollution-reduction-target-aimed-at-creating-good-paying-union-jobs-and-securing-u-s-leadership-on-clean-energy-technologies/>.

<sup>2</sup>U.S. NAT'L CLIMATE ADVISOR, THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTION 1 (Apr. 21, 2021) [hereinafter NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTION], *available at* <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/ndcstaging/PublishedDocuments/United%20States%20of%20America%20First/United%20States%20NDC%20April%202021%20Final.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTION, *supra* note 2, at 1, 14.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., Brady Denis, *As Biden Convenes World Leaders, U.S. Pledges to Cut Emissions up to 52 Percent by 2030*, WASH. POST, Apr. 22, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2021/04/22/global-emissions-52-percent-biden/>.

to affordable energy.<sup>6</sup> This is particularly concerning given that the Obama Administration's pledge to reach 80 percent reduction by 2040 was estimated to cost the United States economy \$3 trillion and 6.5 million industrial sector jobs.<sup>7</sup>

While the Administration has touted the benefits of this nationally determined contribution, it has released few details on how this standard was calculated and chosen. For example, the submission to the UNFCCC states that the National Climate Advisor and the White House Office of Domestic Climate Policy “conducted a detailed analysis to underpin this 2030 target, reviewing a range of pathways for each sector of the economy that produces...greenhouse gases” and “ran an interagency process across the federal government and consulted a range of other stakeholders.”<sup>8</sup> This document only offers vague phrases to describe the process, such as “a bottom-up analysis of existing and potential policies and measures,” and “sector-by-sector emissions reduction pathways.”<sup>9</sup>

If the Administration intends for this standard to drive federal policymaking across numerous sectors and support its substantial funding requests, transparency surrounding its establishment is essential. Further, such standards must be based on accurate calculations and a rigorous review process rather than in response to political pressure.<sup>10</sup> While the Administration insists there are “multiple pathways” to reach this goal,<sup>11</sup> drastic policy changes and pressure on the private sector to meet an unattainable or impractical target could have devastating consequences for our economy and energy security. Congress—and the American people—need more information about the process of choosing this standard before being pushed to take further action.

In order for the Committee to better understand the process for determining the nationally determined contribution, we ask that your office facilitate a briefing for Committee staff on this issue. Please ensure this briefing addresses the following questions:

1. What steps, methods, or calculations did this “bottom-up analysis” entail?
2. Which federal agencies and state, local, and tribal governments were involved in this process, and what was the specific role of each in the process?
3. What stakeholders were consulted, through what methods were they consulted, and how did the National Climate Advisor and the National Climate Task Force organize the feedback received to ensure adequate consideration?

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<sup>6</sup> Coral Davenport et al., *Biden's Bet on a Climate Transition Carries Big Risk*, N.Y. TIMES, Apr. 24, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/24/business/bidens-climate-change.html>.

<sup>7</sup> NERA ECONOMIC CONSULTING, IMPACTS OF GREENHOUSE GAS REGULATIONS ON THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR 12, 51 (2017), available at <https://www.globalenergyinstitute.org/new-report-examines-costs-us-industrial-sector-obamas-paris-pledge>.

<sup>8</sup> NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTION, *supra* note 2, at 3.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at 3, 14.

<sup>10</sup> Brady Dennis & Juliet Eilperin, *Biden Plans to Cut Emissions at Least in Half by 2030*, WASH. POST, Apr. 20, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2021/04/20/biden-climate-change/>.

<sup>11</sup> NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTION, *supra* note 2, at 1.

4. According to the nationally determined contribution document cited above, “technology availability, current costs and available savings, and future cost reductions were considered, as well as the role of enabling infrastructure.”<sup>12</sup> How were these data points determined, and how were they factored in to the “techno-economic analysis”?

5. Per this same document, “[s]tandards, incentives, programs, and support for innovation were all weighed in the analysis.”<sup>13</sup> How were these items quantified and weighed?

6. What, if any, other models or data sources were used to inform this process?

If you have any questions related to this request, please contact the minority staff of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee at (202) 225-6371. Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

  
Rep. Stephanie Bice  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Environment

  
Rep. Anthony Gonzalez  
Member of Congress

  
Rep. Randy Feenstra  
Member of Congress

  
Rep. Carlos Gimenez  
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson, Chair, Committee on Science, Space, and Technology.

The Honorable Mikie Sherrill, Chair, Subcommittee on Environment.

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<sup>12</sup> *Id.* at 3.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*