

Obama hints at new drive on climate change

November 8 2012, by Shaun Tandon



US President Barack Obama after delivering his victory speech on election night in Chicago. Obama has hinted he will make another push to fight climate change after cruising to a new term, but his room for maneuver will be limited even with a new focus after megastorm Sandy.

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Obama, whose hopes for a law restricting [carbon emissions](#) blamed for rising temperatures died in the Senate during his first term, alluded to climate change at his victory rally after the issue's near absence during the campaign.

"We want our children to live in an America that isn't burdened by debt, that isn't weakened by inequality, that isn't threatened by the [destructive power](#) of a warming planet," Obama told cheering supporters in Chicago.

Listing areas on which "we've got more work to do," Obama said he hoped the [United States](#) would work on "freeing ourselves from foreign oil."

Senator Harry Reid, the leader of Obama's Democrats in the chamber where the party defied odds to increase its majority, also pledged to pay attention to climate change but did not offer specifics.

"Climate change is an extremely important issue for me and I hope we can address it reasonably," Reid said. "As we have seen with these storms that are overwhelming our country and the world, we need to do something about it."

Obama spoke little about climate change during the campaign and pledged to maintain the use of [coal](#), a politically fraught issue in the United States where nearly 40 percent of [electricity](#) comes from the highly polluting source.

But a week before the election, superstorm Sandy ravaged the East Coast, briefly shutting down much of New York City and killing more than 100 people in the United States and Canada.

New York Mayor [Michael Bloomberg](#), an independent, said that the

storm may or may not be the result of climate change but called for immediate action. He pointed to Obama's position to make a last-minute endorsement of the president.

The election means that Obama will be able to keep in place his main measures against climate change. He has tightened vehicle emission standards and empowered the Environmental Protection Agency to regulate greenhouse gases from power plants.

Republicans—some of whom believe that climate change is a hoax—have sought to strip the federal agency of its authority and have rejected Obama's support for renewable energy alternatives such as solar and wind.

But with Republicans keeping control of the House and several Democratic senators disagreeing on energy policy, Obama would likely face an uphill struggle to pass any comprehensive regulation limiting carbon emissions.

Republican Mitt Romney, who lost to Obama, had accused Obama of being excessively beholden to environmental groups at the cost of jobs. At the Republican nominating convention in Tampa, Romney mocked Obama for trying to "slow the rise of the oceans" and "heal the planet."

"I think certainly there is a lot more hope than if Mitt Romney would have been elected president," said David Hamilton, director of global warming and energy programs for the Sierra Club environmental group.

Hamilton said he did not sense a mood for compromise by House Republicans but added: "Sometimes in history when the headwind is strong enough, staying in the same place is a notable achievement."

But the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions called on Obama and

Congress to consider a carbon tax, which could also help the United States fill its fiscal hole.

"No one is better placed than the president to help Americans understand both the risks of a warming climate and the opportunities of a clean-energy transition," said the center's president, Eileen Claussen.

Obama's re-election likely brought some relief to climate policymakers in the European Union, which has been at the forefront of international regulations to fight climate change.

"Congratulations, Mr. Obama! Don't forget [climate change](#) this time. We need strong US involvement," Connie Hedegaard, the EU commissioner for climate action, wrote on Twitter.

Despite the lack of regulation, US carbon emissions fell to a 20-year low in the first three months of 2012 due to a switch from coal to natural gas and—ironically—a warmer winter.

UN-backed scientists, however, say that the world needs to cut emissions much more drastically to avoid the worst effects of global warming.

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