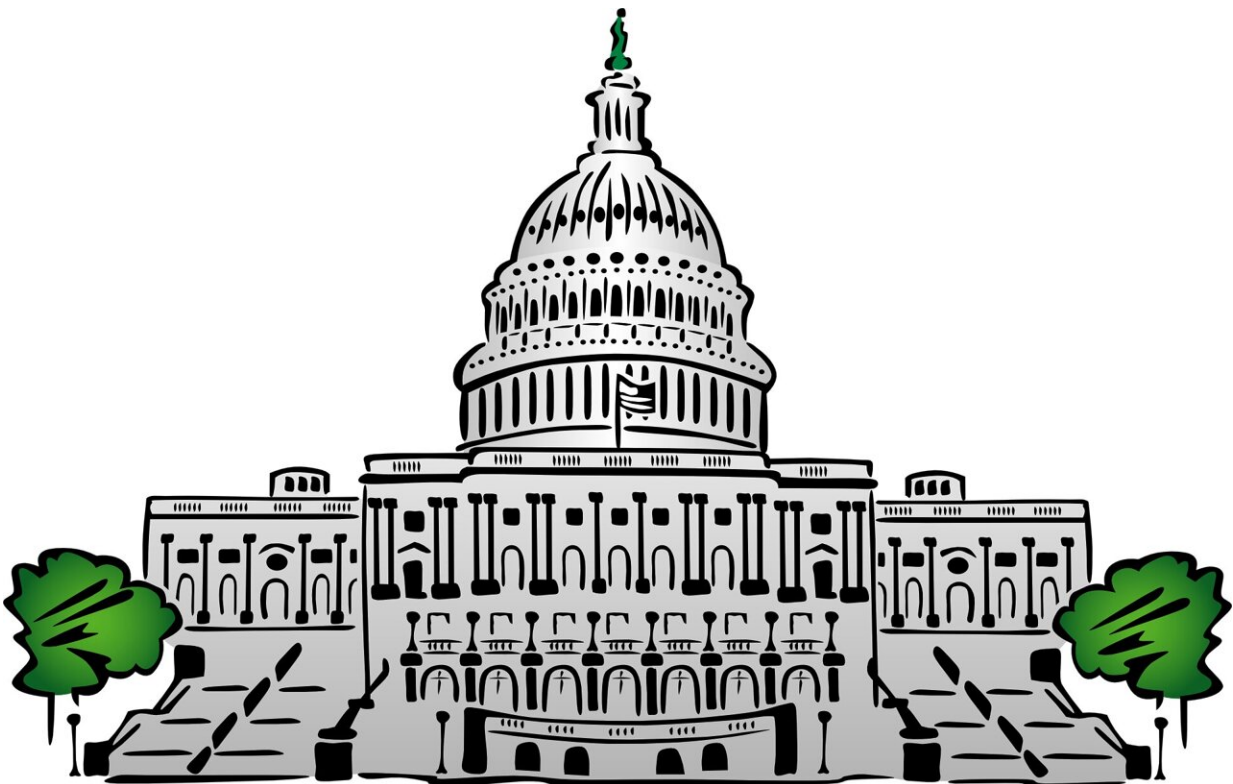


Can Congress still pass some of Biden's climate ideas this year?

May 12 2022, by Anumita Kaur



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President Joe Biden, from campaign trail through his first year in office, declared himself a climate-forward leader.

He promised to slash the nation's greenhouse gas emissions by at least

50% below 2005 levels by 2030, and aimed to hit net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Both goals are vital to avoiding the most disastrous effects of climate change, according to the latest U.N. climate report.

It's been months since Biden's \$1.7 trillion "Build Back Better" plan stalled on Capitol Hill, including an unprecedented \$555 billion to move the nation away from [fossil fuels](#) and toward [clean energy](#).

Democrat Sen. Joe Manchin III of West Virginia refused to endorse the deal in December, depriving Democrats of the vote they needed in a 50-50 Senate.

Manchin has since indicated support to move forward some provisions of the sweeping package, including policies for [green energy](#), prescription drugs, a tax on the wealthy and addressing the country's debt.

That leaves open the possibility of a slimmed-down version of the legislation, if lawmakers can act soon.

"We are running out of time. May is a make or break month in the U.S. Senate on this issue," said Jamal Raad, executive director of Evergreen Action, a climate action advocacy group. "We all know that legislation dies in the heat of summer, and so this work period is really important and a real test of leadership for [Senate Majority] Leader [Charles E.] Schumer and the president on whether they can get these climate investments over the finish line."

Here's a look at some of the major climate-related provisions of the Build Back Better plan, and which ones might still have a chance of passing.

Green energy tax credits

The weight of Build Back Better's climate investments was in tax credits to incentivize shifting toward green energy. The bill allotted \$320 billion in tax credits for producers and buyers of wind, solar and nuclear power.

According to the Rhodium Group, the clean energy tax credits are key to making Biden's 2030 goal a reality. For the most part, the set of tax credits has support among many senators, including Manchin, which may promise a political path forward. According to one Senate Democrat staffer, if any climate-related provisions of Build Back Better move forward, it's likely to be these.

"These are pretty well established. These tax credits have, traditionally anyway, had a pretty substantial body of support, particularly in states that produce a lot of renewable energy, and many of those are more moderate or conservative states," said Barry Rabe, a professor at the University of Michigan's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy. "So I think the energy tax credit in some fashion is probably still on the table."

Methane fee

A provision in the Build Back Better Act would have put a fee on methane emitted from petroleum and natural gas systems. The proposal would cover the entire supply chain, and revenues raised from it would be used to administer the program, provide assistance to companies for monitoring and reducing emissions, and support communities impacted by pollution from oil and gas systems.

A methane fee may not move forward (though some experts hailed this as crucial in curbing planet-warming emissions). Manchin has indicated unwillingness to penalize the fossil fuel industry, and progressives previously criticized the policy as too lax.

"Methane has gained growing attention in recent years because of its very intense, near term impact. ... It's a climate warming source, it's an air pollution source," Rabe said.

Build Back Better's attempt to place a fee on methane also required laying out how to measure it, "which has been a huge issue or challenge. I don't know the inside dealings but it seems like that would be a real stretch at this point," Rabe said.

Electric vehicle rebate

Build Back Better included a rebate for buyers of electric vehicles of up to \$12,500 in tax credits. The rebate only applied to vehicles made at a unionized factory in the U.S..

This is unlikely to move forward, as Manchin as recently as last month called the program "ludicrous," stating that there's already a waiting list for people who want electric vehicles. "When we can't produce enough product for the people that want it and we're still going to pay them to take it—it's absolutely ludicrous in my mind."

He also opposed the union-only provision.

Carbon capture technology

Biden's Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act invested billions in carbon capture projects, or technologies to remove CO₂ emissions from the air.

The Build Back Better Act attempted to invest even more in carbon capture projects. Manchin has signaled support for such technology, offering a potential path forward on the issue.

Some criticize carbon capture projects for being too costly and unreliable, while others state that they're a [crucial element](#) in the climate crisis fight.

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