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New National Poll Finds Americans Prioritize Environmental Protections over Faster Economic Growth by Overwhelming Margins

*Findings present Biden-Harris administration with
a ‘mandate for robust regulatory action on behalf of people and the planet.’*

A [new poll](#) released today by Data for Progress and the Center for Progressive Reform finds broad public support for a progressive climate agenda that relies on regulatory action, even if it means slower economic growth. It also shows that the public opposes the process the government currently uses to assess the costs and benefits of regulations because it undervalues clean air, safe water, and a healthy climate.

One key finding: Likely voters favor taking action to fight climate change and passing down a livable planet to our children and grandchildren over economic growth by a 57-point margin (73 percent prioritize climate, 16 prioritize economic growth).

The results debunk the myth that Americans favor faster economic growth over environmental protection and see government regulations as burdensome “red tape.” To the contrary, the findings provide strong evidence that Americans across the ideological spectrum want the federal government to engage in robust environmental rulemaking in response to pollution and the climate crisis.

“These findings are a mandate for robust regulatory action on behalf of people and the planet,” **said James Goodwin, interim executive director of the Center for Progressive Reform.** “By overwhelming margins, U.S. voters prioritize protecting public and environmental health over unchecked economic growth. The public expects the Biden-Harris administration to make full

use of its regulatory authority to respond to the climate crisis, prevent pollution, and protect future generations, and it should do so.”

“Across party lines, our polling shows that likely voters strongly back government rules to limit water and air pollution and protect public health,” **said Ethan Winter, senior analyst at Data for Progress.** “This overwhelming majority of Americans shows the popularity of the environmental policies the Biden-Harris team ran and won on, and the clear mandate from the American people to address our climate crisis with every tool we can.”

Three in four (74 percent) want the federal government to limit pollution in drinking water, and more than two in three (68 percent) favor limits on air pollution. A solid majority (56 percent) also backs regulatory action to curb fossil fuel emissions, the leading cause of global warming.

Critically, voters across the ideological spectrum overwhelmingly back protections for clean air and water even if they come at the cost of slower economic growth. Fully 80 percent of respondents said they prioritized cleaner water ahead of economic growth, and 76 percent prioritized cleaner air ahead of economic growth — findings that reflect strong support among Democrats, Independents, and Republicans.

Voters across the ideological spectrum also want government agencies to consider how proposed rules will affect the climate. Overall, 71 percent said they want the government to take climate change into account when writing rules. The result reflects support among 82 percent of Democrats; 74 percent of Independents; and 57 percent of Republicans. Strong majorities also back expediting government review of climate-related rules and assessing environmental impacts on future generations in the same way impacts on today’s Americans are assessed. Importantly, President Biden can enact these changes through executive action alone.

The Biden-Harris administration has already started reforming the regulatory process. The president has pledged an “all-of-government” response to the climate crisis and has used his first days in office to rejoin the Paris climate accord, issue several executive orders related to climate change, and more.

“As they take action to respond to the climate crisis, President Biden and Vice President Harris should rest assured that people of all political persuasions believe that protecting our environment should come first,” Goodwin said. “Americans value the planet over profits — and they want our government to take bold and decisive action to protect clean air and water for ourselves and future generations.”

The poll was conducted between January 6 and 7 by Data for Progress, a leading progressive think tank. The poll surveyed a representative sample of 1,156 likely voters about government regulations and processes used to assess and implement them. The margin of error is ± 2.9 percentage points. A summary memo and tabulated poll results are available on Data for Progress’ [website](#).

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Data for Progress is a progressive think tank and polling firm, which arms movements with data-driven tools to fight for a more equitable future. DFP provides polling, data-based messaging, and policy generation for the progressive movement, and advises campaigns and candidates with the tools they need to win.

Through the expertise of 60+ scholars and staff, the Center for Progressive Reform creates powerful tools and strategies for policymakers and the public to advance policies and processes that ensure the health and well-being of people, their communities, and our environment.

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