

## NEWS

## NATION

# The President's Climate Plan

## New rules would affect U.S. power plants

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President Barack Obama outlines his plan to address climate change during a speech on June 25.

President Barack Obama has laid out a new plan to combat climate change by reducing carbon emissions from U.S. power plants. In a speech delivered at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday, Obama said he would use his executive powers without needing support from Congress.

"The question is not whether we need to act," Obama said. "The question is whether we will have the courage to act before it's too late."

The central point of Obama's plan focuses on new rules that would require power plants to reduce and control the amount of carbon dioxide they emit. Carbon dioxide is a heat-trapping gas that many scientists say is a cause of global warming—a worldwide rise in temperature. This can produce changes in weather and sea levels.

According to the U.S. Energy Department, 40 percent of U.S. carbon dioxide emissions, and one-third of greenhouse gases overall, come from electric power plants.

Obama's plan includes increased government support for renewable energy technology and funding to help communities prepare for extreme weather conditions caused by rising temperatures. These include powerful storms, such as hurricanes, and long droughts.

### Different Opinions

Not everyone supports the President's plan. Many Republican lawmakers say the plan will limit energy production and therefore hurt the economy. John Boehner, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, called putting controls on existing power plants "absolutely crazy" last week, according to the Associated Press.

People working in the manufacturing industry also oppose the president's program. Those involved in coal and energy production say that power plants will have to raise electricity prices and cut jobs to pay for upgrades to meet the new standards.

Still, environmental activists praised Obama's speech as an important step forward.



TOM VIZER—BELLEVILLE NEWS-DEMOCRAT/GETTY IMAGES

Smoke rises from the Prairie State power plant in Illinois—the largest coal-fueled plant built in the U.S. in the last 30 years. Debate continues on whether this kind of energy is a cause of climate change.

"This is the change we have been waiting for," said Michael Brune, executive director of

the environmental group the Sierra Club, in a statement. "Today, President Obama has shown he is keeping his word to future generations."

#### **Dealing with Congress**

President Obama has talked about combatting climate change since his 2008 election. However, during his first term, he focused mostly on the nation's economy and health care reform. In his second inaugural address last January, Obama mentioned climate change again, but this is the first time he has offered more details.

Congress has also made little progress in addressing climate change over the past few years, mostly due to major disagreements between Republicans and Democrats. Obama's new plan makes use of his executive powers, which would allow him to go around Congress to ensure that the changes happen.

"He doesn't need Congress," former Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Christie Whitman told AP. "What that does, of course, is make (Congress) madder."

Obama told the audience that he was acting "as a president, as a father, and as an American. . . . I refuse to condemn your generation and future generations to a planet that's beyond fixing."

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