

Policy At A Glance:

Climate Change Provisions of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (H.R. 3684)

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA, H.R. 3684) is a transformational law that aims to better the lives of Americans by sustainably and equitably growing the economy, tackling the climate crisis, and creating good-paying union jobs. Among other provisions, IIJA aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve resilience to the effects of climate change.

Introduction

Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions produce an increase in the earth's temperature, which may result in changes in sea level, precipitation patterns, and storm severity.

Collectively, this is known as climate change.¹ Climate change is well known to impact one's physical health by increasing acute and chronic respiratory conditions; food-, vector-, and water-borne diseases; and extreme weather-related mortality and morbidity.² In addition, climate change is known to have direct and indirect effects on one's mental health.² (For more information, please refer to IHPL's Issue Brief titled [Climate Change and Mental Health](#).)

The United States government is taking steps to tackle the devastating effects of climate change by investing in transformative policies, programs, and initiatives. On November 15, 2021, President Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA, H.R. 3684) into law.³ IIJA aims to better the lives of Americans by sustainably and equitably growing the economy, tackling the climate crisis, and expanding employment opportunities. Among other provisions, some climate change provisions of IIJA include the following:⁴

1. Making the largest investment in clean energy transmission and electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure in history
2. Electrifying thousands of school and transit buses across the country
3. Creating a new Grid Deployment Authority to build a clean, resilient, 21st-century electric grid

According to the Biden-Harris Administration, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is "the largest long-term investment in America's infrastructure and competitiveness in nearly a century."⁵ This brief will focus on the climate change provisions of IIJA.

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Relevant Dates for H.R. 3684³

- 6/4/2021** Introduced in the United States House of Representatives
- 7/1/2021** Passed by the House
- 8/10/2021** Passed by the Senate with amendment
- 11/5/2021** Amended version passed by the House
- 11/15/2021** Signed by President Biden and became law



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Environmental Remediation and Clean Energy

Environmental Remediation

Among other provisions, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will do the following:⁴

1. Invest \$21 billion in environmental remediation, making the largest investment in American history that addresses the pollution issue impacting the public health of neighborhoods and communities in America
2. Invest in reclaiming abandoned mine land, capping orphaned gas wells, and cleaning up Superfund and brownfield sites

Capping and plugging orphaned gas wells aid in the reduction of methane emission, thereby helping to tackle the climate crisis.⁵ Also, Superfund areas are polluted sites in America that require a long-term response to clean up hazardous material contamination.⁶ Hispanics and Black Americans are more likely to live near Superfund sites, disproportionately exposing these groups to elevated lead levels and other toxins.⁵

More Equitable Clean Energy

IJJA will invest over \$62 billion for the United States Department of Energy (DOE) to deliver a more equitable clean energy future for Americans through the deployment of the following:^{7,8}

1. Innovative technologic advances to decarbonize most of the economy
2. Large-scale carbon management solutions

These initiatives support the Biden-Harris Administration's goal of 100% carbon-free electricity by 2035 and a net-zero-carbon economy by 2050.⁷



Funding for Clean Energy Programs

Under the Infrastructure Investment and Job Acts, \$550 million will be invested in the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program (EECBG) and \$500 million in the State Energy Program.⁹ Both programs aim to provide grants to cities, communities, U.S. territories, states, and Indian tribes to develop and implement clean energy programs and projects that combat the climate crisis and generate more employment opportunities for Americans.⁹ Also, children and teachers will have cleaner schools through the deployment of a \$5 billion Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) initiative that aims to:⁹

1. Replace thousands of diesel school buses with electric buses
2. Provide renewable energy and energy-efficient improvements at public school facilities

The transition from diesel to electric transportation will cause a slew of positive downstream effects. This effort will help address the climate crisis and improve the health of Americans.

Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will invest \$7.5 billion to launch the first-ever national network of electric vehicle chargers in the United States.⁵ This component of the law is critical because it will help support domestic manufacturing jobs and address the climate crisis. Of note, IJJA will provide funding for the utilization of electric vehicle chargers along highway corridors to facilitate long-distance travel and provide communities with convenient charging stations where people shop, live, and work.⁴ Lastly, these federal funds will focus on disadvantaged, rural, and hard-to-reach communities.



Developing a Resilient System to Combat Climate Change



Climate Resilient Infrastructure

Annually, climate change negatively impacts millions of Americans when airport power goes down, schools get flooded, and roads wash out.⁴ In 2021 alone, America faced 22 climate-related and extreme weather disaster events costing greater than \$1 billion each.⁴ Also, populations known to be resource-poor and marginalized are more likely to live in regions that are more susceptible to flooding and other climate change-related weather events.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will invest \$50 billion to make infrastructure more resilient to the impacts of climate change and make our communities safer. IIJA offers protection against floods, wildfires, and droughts and invests immensely in weatherization. According to the Biden-Harris Administration, IIJA is “ the largest investment in the resilience of physical and natural systems in American history.”⁴

Resilient, Clean, 21st-Century Electric Grid

Notably, the electric grid in the United States is aging and in need of urgent modernization. The need for modernization was highlighted by the power outages that took place in Texas in 2021.⁴ According to a study conducted by the United States Department of Energy (DOE), power outages cost up to \$70 billion each year.⁴

To address the need for an updated electric grid, IIJA offers the following provisions:⁴

1. Invest in research and development for advanced transmission and electricity distribution technologies
2. Create a new Grid Deployment Authority
3. Promote smart grid technologies that deliver flexibility and resilience

IIJA provides \$27.65 billion to improve electric grid reliability and resilience. Given that solar and wind resources are not predictable or readily available, grid reliability is essential to match the supply of electricity to the demand.¹⁰

The foundation of grid reliability is the creation of a more integrated grid that provides customers with the high-quality electricity they need anywhere and anytime.¹¹ It is worth noting that IIJA is also interested in developing a resilient electric grid that can withstand the effects of climate change (e.g., wildfires and extreme weather).¹⁰

Conclusion

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is a transformational law that aims to tackle the climate crisis, expand employment opportunities, and equitably and sustainably grow the economy. The Biden-Harris Administration is currently making strides to implement the various provisions offered by IIJA. This effort is commendable and will require multidisciplinary support to ensure its execution is successful. The success of IIJA is essential because the downstream effects are vast (e.g., tackling the climate crisis, improving the health of Americans, etc.). It is worth noting that IIJA is sensitive to the needs of underserved populations as it pays special attention to disadvantaged, rural, and hard-to-reach communities. Lastly, the passage of IIJA signifies the federal government's interest to not only build back America, but also provide the most vulnerable populations with the resources they need to level the playing field to support health equity.

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Did you know?

In 2019, the United States transportation sector generated the largest portion of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in America, contributing to 29% of the GHG emissions in the nation.¹²



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