



TODAY'S CLEAN ENERGY CAN FUEL BIDEN'S LOW-CARBON VISION

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The inauguration hasn't taken place yet, but President-elect Biden's energy plan has already taken substantive shape. At its heart, Mr. Biden's plan, authored by a group called the Climate 21 Project, calls for new high-level climate teams across 11 federal government departments or agencies with significant climate responsibilities. The teams will remain accountable to the agency's leader but still be connected to the National Climate Council and "empowered to mobilize the full assets of the department or agency."

It's a good start. After all, in 2019, the federal government **procured** \$586 billion worth of goods and services, so its purchasing power can reshape markets. However, over the coming months, the Climate 21 recommendations need to be harmonized with candidate Biden's campaign **plan**. The plan calls for low- or zero-carbon energy production, emphasizes green industry manufacturing, and proposes a list of climate-friendly regulations including new fuel economy standards aimed at ensuring zero emissions for new light- and medium-duty vehicles and annual improvements for heavy duty vehicles.

Fuel economy is one measure of progress; reducing carbon emissions with proven and available solutions ought to be a goal as well. The trouble is clean energies that actually work are getting overlooked. Fifteen states and Washington, D.C., for example, have proposed full electrification of medium- and heavy-duty trucks by 2050, assuming the electrical grid will be fully decarbonized by that time. Why make electrification the direction? Production of electric vehicles is terribly carbon intensive and without trillions of dollars of investment, the grid simply will not be decarbonized by 2050. Many experts quietly acknowledge, in fact, that at best, renewables will be able to power only about half of the grid by mid-century.

Surprising to many, clean energy solutions are already at hand. Propane-fueled medium- and heavy-duty internal combustion engine vehicles currently provide a lower carbon footprint solution in 38 U.S. states and Washington, D.C., when compared to medium- and heavy-duty electric vehicles charged using the electrical grid. In fact, the carbon intensity -- the amount of carbon by weight emitted per unit of energy consumed -- of electricity today is 31% versus 19% for renewable propane. Decarbonization can be accelerated even further and faster by adopting clean fuels like hydrogen, syngas from biomass, and ammonia for industrial uses, as well as

bioethanol as a replacement for jet fuel and **dimethyl ether** blended with propane as a clean energy replacement for diesel.

Swinging both federal purchasing dollars and research investments toward low-carbon, near-zero emission fuels are a great way for President-elect Biden to build a coalition of those willing to support climate protection goals and do so by matching the best low-carbon, clean energy to every application. This approach supports real science, takes advantage of proven and available technologies and prevents us from falling into a one-size-fits-all solution.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Tucker is an engineer, entrepreneur, business leader, speaker and is now the president and chief executive officer of the Propane Education & Research Council. He has worked in the propane industry nearly his entire professional career, having served as the director of business development for Inergy, chief executive officer of Premier Propane, and the chief operating officer of Columbia Propane, a unit of the Columbia Energy Group. Tucker is also the former chairman of a PERC advisory committee on engine fuel matters and is active with the National Propane Gas Association and the Virginia Propane Gas Association.