

## **Obama resorts to executive power to tackle climate change**

Steven R. Hurst, Associated Press



President Barack Obama

is proposing sweeping steps to limit heat-trapping pollution from coal-fired power plants and to boost renewable energy production on federal property, resorting to his executive powers to tackle climate change and sidestepping the partisan gridlock in Congress.

The far-reaching plan marks Obama's most prominent effort yet to deliver on a major priority he laid out in his first presidential campaign and recommitted to at the start of his second term: to fight climate change in the U.S. and abroad and prepare American communities for its effects. Environmental activists have been irked that Obama's high-minded goals never materialized into a comprehensive plan.

In a speech Tuesday at Georgetown University, Obama was to announce he is issuing a presidential memorandum to launch the first-ever federal regulations on carbon dioxide emitted by existing power plants, moving to curb the gases blamed for global warming despite adamant opposition from Republicans in Congress and some energy producers.

American public opinion about climate change has proven a major barrier to addressing the issue. The Pew Research center released polling data Monday that showed just four-in-10 say the warming of the planet poses a major threat to the U.S. Pew said the finding makes "Americans among the least concerned about this issue of the 39 publics surveyed, along with people in China, Czech Republic, Jordan, Israel, Egypt and Pakistan."

Obama raised climate change as a key second-term issue in his inaugural address in January, but has offered few details since. In his February State of the Union

## **Obama resorts to executive power to tackle climate change**

Published on Electronic Component News (<http://www.ecnmag.com>)

---

policy speech, he issued an ultimatum to lawmakers: "If Congress won't act soon to protect future generations, I will."

"His view reflects reality," White House spokesman Jay Carney said Monday. "We've seen Congress attempt to deal with this issue, and fail to."

Framing Obama's efforts as part of a broader, global movement, the White House said the U.S. can play a leading role in persuading other nations to join in efforts to slow the warming of the planet.

Obama is calling for an end to U.S. support for public financing for new coal-fired plants overseas, officials said, but will exempt plants in the poorest nations as long as the cleanest technology available in those countries is being used. He's also pledging to work with major polluting countries like China and India to curb emissions, building on an agreement Obama struck recently with China's leader to phase out hydrofluorocarbons, potent greenhouse gases used in air conditioners and refrigerators.

Sidestepping Congress by using executive action does not guarantee Obama smooth sailing. Lawmakers could introduce legislation to thwart Obama's efforts. And the rules for existing power plants will almost certainly face legal challenges in court.

Even before Obama spoke, reaction from Republicans was swift and dismissive, reflecting the opposition to climate legislation on Capitol Hill that prompted a frustrated Obama to sidestep lawmakers and take action himself. Don Stewart, a spokesman for Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said imposing carbon rules on power plants amounts to a national energy tax.

"Will the president explain the massive costs to American jobs? Will the president explain how low-income Americans would pay for their new, higher utility bills?" Stewart said.

By expanding permitting on public lands, Obama hopes to generate enough electricity from renewable energy projects such as wind and solar to power the equivalent of 6 million homes by 2020, effectively doubling the electric capacity federal lands now produce, senior administration officials said. He'll also set a goal to install 100 megawatts of energy-producing capacity at federal housing projects by the end of the decade.

Obama also was to announce \$8 billion in federal loan guarantees to spur investment in technologies that can keep carbon dioxide produced by power plants from being released into the atmosphere.

The lynchpin of Obama's plan involves new and existing power plants. Forty percent of U.S. carbon dioxide emissions, and one-third of greenhouse gases overall, come from electric power plants, according to the federal Energy Information Administration. The Obama administration already has proposed controls on new plants, but those controls have been delayed and not yet finalized. Tuesday's

## **Obama resorts to executive power to tackle climate change**

Published on Electronic Component News (<http://www.ecnmag.com>)

---

announcement would be the first public confirmation that Obama plans to extend carbon controls to existing plants.

Obama also will announce more aggressive steps to increase efficiency for appliances such as refrigerators and lamps, the White House said, adding that stricter standards could reduce carbon pollution by more than 3 billion tons between now and 2030 — the equivalent of a half a year's worth of carbon pollution from power plants. Another component of Obama's proposal will involve ramping up hydropower production from existing dams.

"The country is facing a threat; the president is facing facts," said Dan Lashof of the Natural Resources Defense Council, praising Obama for taking aim at power plants. "Reducing that pollution is the most important step we can take as a nation to stand up to climate change."

A spokesman for major power companies said the industry long has understood the importance of addressing climate change and has been working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for two decades. The industry will consider whether new climate change policies and regulations "mesh" with its ongoing transition to a cleaner generating fleet and an enhanced electric grid, said Tom Kuhn, president of the Edison Electric Institute, a group that represents power companies.

**Source URL (retrieved on 04/24/2015 - 11:10pm):**

[http://www.ecnmag.com/news/2013/06/obama-resorts-executive-power-tackle-climate-change?qt-video\\_of\\_the\\_day=0](http://www.ecnmag.com/news/2013/06/obama-resorts-executive-power-tackle-climate-change?qt-video_of_the_day=0)