

The First 100 Days: A Biden Presidency

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Joe Biden thought about running for President in 1980. He was only 37 at the time and rightly decided to reconsider. Today, the former Vice President is 77 and is the Democratic nominee for President. With many decades of public service under his belt since his first stint for the Oval Office, look for those experiences to not only shape the tone of his possible presidency, but to also be a roadmap to his first 100 days in office.

Before being selected as President Obama's Vice President, Biden served in the United States Senate for 36 years. His tenure has been described as being aligned with the moderate wing of the Democratic Party, and Biden was known as a fighter for the middle class, women's rights, and environmental reform and a hawk as the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee. Some of his core legislative achievements and votes included funding for mass transit, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, the Violence Against Women Act, and support for

Operation Desert Storm in 1992.

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As Vice President, Biden was a vocal supporter of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, served as one of the leading representatives with NATO leaders on the Administration's policy in Syria, and played a key role in the passage of the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012.

So, what does all of this tell us? Will Vice President Biden stay core to his moderate roots? Or, should we expect a significant policy shift due to a new economy and the deadly pandemic that has created a new normal on Wall Street and at the kitchen table?

If Vice President Biden is elected in November, it is my belief that he will maintain his center lane but will find ways to achieve common ground with both the left and the right

spectrum of the political divide, especially if the Democrats only control one chamber of the Congress.

Vice President Biden's first 100 days will likely focus in on the following five major categories:

Economy/Jobs

The best way to speak directly to his election mandate and constituencies will be a swift push for a major jobs recovery bill that will likely be anchored by a robust infrastructure package, similar to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that Biden helped shepherd and implement in 2009. These projects might include: a focus on school

construction, clean water investments, 5G and other new technologies, and green energy and transportation. Even without congressional action during this effort, look for the Biden Administration to make early calls toward supporting an increase of the minimum wage to \$15/hour, strengthening unions, and creating a national paid leave policy.

COVID-19

With the likelihood of a prolonged COVID pandemic, the Biden team will look to use the recovery effort to secure additional funding to ramp-up any COVID-19 response efforts and procure additional medical supplies, school funding, state and local support, PPE, treatments, supply chain readiness, and vaccines. The Vice President will also likely

make a major push on remote learning and broadband expansion to ensure kids have an opportunity to safely continue learning.

Race

Racial justice has quickly become a key issue in the election cycle, and Vice President Biden has positioned reform and racial unity as a major platform in his candidacy. It will be debated, but the selection of Senator Kamala Harris as his Vice President spoke directly to his view on the need to empower African American voices in his administration and communities of color. Recent events have forced both candidates to address the topic directly, and voters are listening carefully on how each will govern. Biden has also said that he will use his first days

in office to address the issue of race and will likely create a commission to develop a list of recommendations for his Cabinet to quickly adopt and to be used as a skeleton for proposed congressional legislation.

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Immigration

A Biden White House can be expected to make shoring-up the DACA program and the restoration of DAPA one of its first actions upon taking office, assuming the current Administration has not yet succeeded in fully rolling back the program. Biden would likely

use this announcement to reverse other policies on asylum and deportation and lay out a roadmap for Congress on comprehensive immigration reform that supports more pathways for citizenship.

The Environment

The Vice President has said he will rejoin the Paris Climate Accord and push for stronger international agreements. Also look for his team to reverse many of the environmental regulatory rollbacks from the Trump Administration at the EPA, Interior Department, and other agencies. These items could include, restoring limits on methane emissions from oil and gas drilling and CO2 emissions from power plants and manufacturing, pausing

drilling on public lands and offshore, restoring national monuments and parks, and protecting areas such as ANWR, as well as resuming aggressive enforcement of environmental laws.

While likely to extend beyond the first 100 days, look for a Biden White House to begin to sow the seeds early for these other signature issues that his team will likely look to accomplish before the 2022 midterms:

Health Care

One of Biden's top priorities for his Administration will be restoring the ACA and creating a public option. Democrats campaigned heavily on health care in 2018 and 2020 and will look to fulfill their promises to the party's base, especially in one of the areas where the party has moved to the left in

the past five years. Biden's health care agenda would also include ending surprise billing; allowing Medicare to negotiate drug prices; establishing a body within HHS to determine reasonable prices for new specialty drugs and treatments; and limiting price increases on generic, biotech, and brand drugs.

Tax

Vice President Biden campaigned heavily on raising the corporate tax – calling to increase it from the 21% set by the TCJA to 28%, which is still below the levels seen during the Obama Administration. Biden would also establish

new rules to discourage shifting profits or operations overseas and establish a minimum corporate tax.

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The Vice President is hopeful that the revenues from these changes can go towards funding Democratic priorities such as health care, paid leave, investments in education, and reductions in college tuition.

In summary, a Biden Administration will largely track the previous Obama presidency. His Cabinet will also have strong ties to the former team, and their policies will largely seek to strengthen past achievements. What will be different from both the Trump and Obama White Houses will be the Vice President’s ability to read Congress and negotiate across the aisle. Biden also has long-term relationships with international leaders that might help him in pending trade talks and geopolitical hot spots. Because the economy will likely be in turmoil, the new Biden Administration will not have a lot of time to act before the public may grow more tiresome of Washington’s inability to get things done.

Beyond these policy issues and his strong grasp of DC’s legislative and regulatory levers, don’t underestimate Biden’s desire to look

to use his presidency to make history. Biden is aiming high and making history with the selection of Senator Kamala Harris as his running mate. Especially given that Biden may face pressure to limit his presidency to one term, expect Biden to look quickly for other ways to define his legacy and highlight his values in areas including: personnel decisions, foreign policy, infrastructure, labor policies, immigration, and more.

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He didn’t run in 1980, but the young maverick from Scranton, Pennsylvania did dream big when he won his Senate seat at age 29. If he can manage some highly-recognized advancements in his 100 days, he and his team might have an opportunity to claim a true election mandate, enabling them to address some of the key policy issues that have been stuck in partisan gridlock for the last 15 years or more.