

- Mark your confusion.
- Purposefully annotate the article (1-2 mature, thoughtful responses per page to what the author is saying)
- Write a 250+ word response to the article.

(If you are a teacher or student who would like to modify this Google Doc, go to File > Make a Copy. I cannot and do not respond to Share requests -- my apologies!)

## What Would a Biden Presidency Look Like?

By *The Week* Staff, October 11, 2020

*The Democratic challenger is pitching an ambitious progressive platform. Here's everything you need to know:*

Joe Biden says he wants to be like Franklin Roosevelt, reviving the U.S. after an economic catastrophe while also fundamentally transforming it for decades to come. Even Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) says Biden's platform would make him "the most progressive president since FDR." Since securing the Democratic nomination, the former vice president has moved to the left on key issues, forming a "unity task force" with Sanders and adopting Sen. Elizabeth Warren's (D-Mass.) proposal of universal preschool and subsidized child care. His "Build Back Better" agenda includes more than \$6 trillion in spending over a decade, which Biden insists he can negotiate with Republicans in Congress. "We're not just going to tinker around the edges," he says.

Last week, we looked at President Trump's agenda for a second term; here is what Biden says he'll do if elected.

### COVID-19

Biden has hammered the Trump administration for failing to coordinate a unified national pandemic response, and one of his first appointments would be a single official charged with addressing persistent shortages in testing supplies and personal protective equipment. Biden wants the federal government to hire 100,000 people to conduct contact tracing, and his administration would encourage asymptomatic Americans to get tested if they've come in contact with someone who has tested positive. Biden conceded last month that as president he would lack constitutional authority to impose a national mask mandate, but he would encourage mandates on the state and local level, plus new restrictions or lockdowns if necessary. Biden would push for hazard pay for essential workers, and he pledges that all Americans, insured or not, will not pay out-of-pocket expenses for an eventual COVID-19 vaccine.

### The economy

Biden proposes a level of public investment in American business not seen since World War II. He wants the federal government to spend \$400 billion over four years purchasing U.S.-based goods and services and \$300 billion in research and development for clean-energy initiatives. Biden also calls for a \$15 federal minimum wage and is aggressively pro-union. He wants the Treasury Department to offer interest-free loans to small- and medium-size businesses "through the duration" of the pandemic crisis. Moody's Analytics estimates that Biden's proposals would create 18.6 million new jobs in his first term and an average post-tax income bump of \$4,800, while Trump's policies would lead to an estimated 11.2 million new jobs and a nominal income gain for the average household.

### Health care

Biden rejected "Medicare for all" during the primaries, promising instead to strengthen and expand the Affordable Care Act, now supported by a record 62 percent of Americans. He wants to add a public option for people to buy into Medicare, allow the federal government to negotiate pharmaceutical prices, and increase federal subsidies to drive down premiums for people who purchase plans on federal exchanges. With the new subsidies, a 40-year-old making \$50,000 would save \$168 per month on the second-lowest-cost gold plan, the Kaiser Family Foundation found. Biden's proposal would extend coverage to millions of low-income people in the dozen states that have refused to expand Medicaid. Biden also wants to lower the age of Medicare eligibility from 65 to 60 and invest \$125 billion over 10 years in drug-addiction treatment.

## **Taxes**

Biden proposes taxing corporations and the wealthy at much higher rates. His plans would raise about \$3.8 trillion over the next decade, with 75 percent of that coming from the top 1 percent of households, and more than half of that coming from the top 0.1 percent — Americans making more than \$3.2 million a year. The top individual tax rate would return to 39.6 percent, capital gains accrued by millionaires would be taxed as ordinary income, and the corporate tax rate would rise from 21 percent to 28 percent. He'd also apply the 12.4 percent Social Security payroll tax to earned income above \$400,000.

## **Education**

In addition to universal pre-K for all 3- and 4-year-olds, Biden supports Sanders' College for All Act, which would provide matching federal grants to states that eliminate public college and university tuition for students from households making less than \$125,000. Biden also proposes significant investment in community colleges to improve campus facilities and eliminate tuition. He wants to ban for-profit charter schools and triple federal aid — from \$16 billion to about \$48 billion — to low-income school districts.

## **Climate change**

Biden has proposed \$2 trillion in clean-energy investments. He wants to upgrade 4 million buildings to meet energy-efficiency standards, hitting net-zero greenhouse gas emissions for all new buildings by 2030; install 500 million solar panels and 60,000 U.S.-made wind turbines to eliminate carbon emissions from the electric sector by 2035; and, most ambitiously, put the U.S. on a path to net-zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2050. "When I think about climate change," Biden said, "the word I think of is 'jobs.'" He'd also cancel Trump's withdrawal of the U.S. from the Paris climate agreement.

## **Criminal justice and race**

Biden has sought to make amends for his 1994 crime bill by offering sweeping, progressive criminal justice reforms. He would create a \$20 billion federal grant program to incentivize states — responsible for the vast majority of the U.S. prison population — to reduce incarceration. Biden would abolish the death penalty at the federal level and allow states to legalize recreational marijuana without the threat of federal retaliation. Biden rejects calls to "defund the police," but does support calls for reforms. He wants to limit the sale of military weapons to police departments and create a federal corps of unarmed first responders — made up of social workers, EMTs, and mental-health professionals — to assist with nonviolent emergencies on the local level. Many of Biden's proposals are aimed at racial inequality, such as his plan for tuition-free public college for middle-class families. "In good times, communities of color still lag," Biden says. "In bad times, they get hit first and the hardest. And in recovery, they take the longest to bounce back."

## **Response option(s):**

- Of all the issues listed in this article, which is most important to you? Do you agree with the President's stance on the issue? Explain.
- After reading the article, what is one main idea that you find most remarkable (meaning, "most worthy of a remark" -- so it can be interesting, concerning, confusing, alarming, offensive, etc)? What is it that you find so remarkable? Explain.
- After reading the article, what additional questions do you have? Research these on your own and write about what you find.
- Summarize any point made in the article and respond.