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With the announcement of our board member, [Secretary John Kerry](#), as the new special envoy for climate change, the incoming Biden administration is prioritizing the climate crisis. But for effective climate action, our government must demonstrate—and actively communicate—how policies can achieve better health today for our families and communities.

In this month's issue, we're sharing opportunities to restore science and make equity and health the driving reasons behind swift and broad climate action.

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Communicating The Climate/Health Connection

It's essential that every American understands that climate change is not just a pressing environmental issue; it's also a [public health crisis](#).

The Biden administration would be wise to put into **bold print** how climate action matters to the priorities that lifted them to victory: Addressing COVID-19, racial injustice, and the pandemic-fueled economic crisis.

Focusing on health transcends politics, makes climate change personal, and gets people off the



sidelines and into the conversation about the importance of climate policies.

Increasing energy efficiency and transitioning America to clean energy can help get us off fossil fuels, bolster our resilience to respiratory infections like COVID-19, and promote equity in communities that are hit hardest by pollution.

Creating A Health-Focused Climate Response In The Biden Administration



Include White House and agency leadership with public health backgrounds

...including the White House climate policy coordinator, Environmental Protection Agency, the Council for Environmental Quality, and other climate-related agencies and offices.

Ensure environmental justice and health are included in decision making across agencies.



Programs at the Departments of Energy, Agriculture, Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and others can send market signals and tackle climate change through transportation, infrastructure, buildings and more—but don't always account for their health and equity effects.

An advisory board that coordinates policies across agencies can reduce risks to children, the elderly, and other vulnerable groups from climate change. Actions can include:

- More pollution monitoring in frontline communities.
- Targeting clean energy investments to ensure disadvantaged communities benefit.
- Providing resources and creating tools to better understand disparities.
- Increasing local input on policies as part of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Improve the National Institutes of Health's response to climate change.



Currently, only 0.05% of NIH's total \$42 billion budget addresses climate change, which cannot support the research or personnel needed to protect health from climate risks. As laid out in a [recent piece](#) by our board member, Dr. Howie Frumkin and Dr. Richard Jackson, a climate change institute within NIH could:

- Better prepare Americans for mental and physical health risks and identify effective prevention and treatment strategies.
- Provide a blueprint for reconfiguring hospitals and clinics to be climate-ready and to reach net zero carbon emissions as soon as possible.
- Train researchers and our medical workforce so they are prepared for health threats of climate change.

Use existing science to develop the social cost of air pollution metrics for policy assessments.



Currently, the Social Cost of Carbon only incorporates costs due to climate damages attributed to carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrogen dioxide emissions. It can expand to include the parallel costs of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, particulate matter, volatile organic compounds, and ammonium. EPA includes these costs for some major air quality regulations, but it's not standard for the other agencies.

Restore the role of science and increase health protections at EPA.



The agency can stop work on anti-science rules like the Cost-Benefit Analysis and the Science Transparency Rule, which make it harder to justify regulations by limiting the consideration of “co-benefits” in air quality standards and restrict the scientific studies used for setting standards and other policy decisions.

EPA can also begin reversing and updating the more than [100 environmental rollbacks](#) that have the most significant impacts on health—such as the [Affordable Clean Energy Rule](#), [Mercury and Air Toxics Standards](#), and Clean Car Standards.

A roadmap for climate and health policy



COVID-19, systemic racism, and climate change are overlapping crises that we can and must tackle together. On Thursday, our Climate MD leader and ER physician [Dr. Renee Salas](#) will provide a blueprint for policymakers by launching the 2020 [Lancet Countdown U.S. Policy Brief](#). This yearly analysis highlights key threats and opportunities climate change poses for health in the United States. Our Board Chair [Gina McCarthy](#), former Assistant Secretary for Health [Dr. Howard Koh](#), and Property Brothers' [Drew Scott](#) will be featured, among others. Join us for the launch, Dec. 3, 12:00 - 2:00 pm ET. [Register now](#)

Preparing a climate-ready healthcare workforce



Climate change touches every medical discipline and practice—from pediatrics to psychology to emergency, surgery, cancer treatment and more. Our [Climate MD program](#) is providing research on the climate impacts to healthcare delivery, preparing medical leaders to safeguard the health of their patients, working with community health clinics, and changing the national narrative on climate through health messaging.

Join our team!



We're looking for a Research Project Coordinator for our new project, Building Climate Resilient Community Health Clinics. This multi-year program will develop an integrated climate resilience toolkit for community health clinics.

[Learn more and apply.](#)

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