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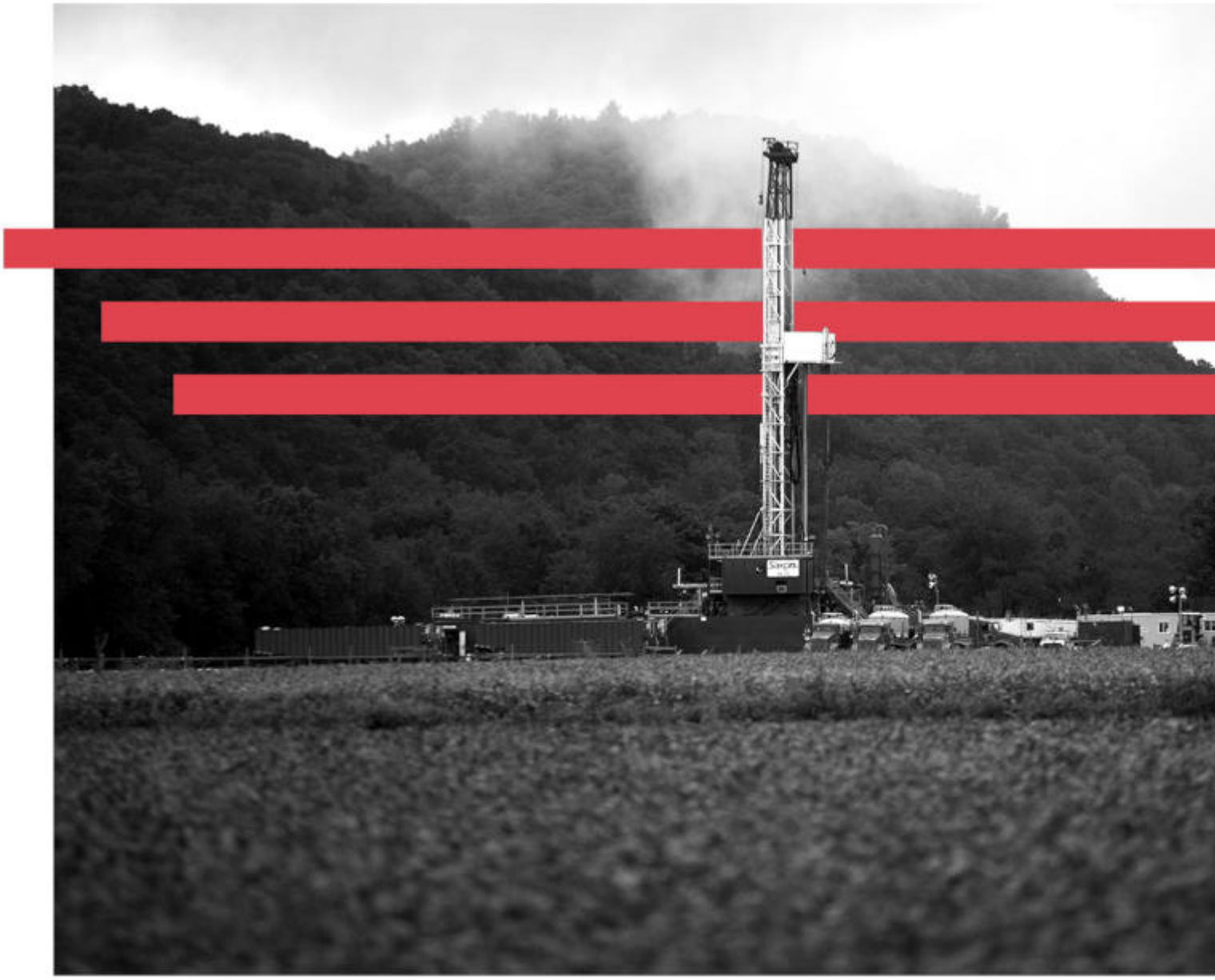
Helene and Milton, the two massive hurricanes that just swept into the country — killing hundreds of people and leaving both devastation and rumblings of political upheaval in seven states — amounted to their own October surprise. Not that the storms led to some irredeemable gaffe or unveiled some salacious scandal. The surprise, really, may be that not even the hurricanes have pushed concerns about climate change more toward the center of the presidential campaign.

With early voting already underway and two weeks before Election Day, when voters will decide between Vice President Kamala Harris, who has called climate change an "existential threat," and former President Donald Trump, who has called climate change a "hoax," Grist's editorial staff presents a climate-focused voter's guide — a package of analyses and predictions about what the next four years may bring from the White House, depending on who wins.

The next administration will be decisive for the country's progress on critical climate goals. By 2030, just a year after the next president would leave office, the U.S. has committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50 to 52% below 2005 levels, and expects to supply up to 13 million electric vehicles annually. A little further down the line, though no less critical, the country's climate goals include reaching 100% carbon-free electricity by 2035 and achieving a net-zero emissions economy by 2050.

As you gear up to vote, here are 15 ways that Harris' and Trump's climate- and environment-related policies could affect your life — along with some information to help inform your vote.



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Your energy mix

Over the last year or so, utility companies across the country have woken up to a new reality: After two decades of flat growth, electricity demand is about to spike, due to the combined pressures of new data centers, cryptocurrency mining, a manufacturing boom and the electrification of buildings and transportation.

While the next president will not directly decide how the states supply power to their new and varied customers, he or she will oversee the massive system of incentives, subsidies and loans by which the federal government influences how much utilities meet electricity demand by burning fossil fuels — the crucial question for the climate.

Trump's answer to that question can perhaps be summed up in the three-word catchphrase he's deployed on the campaign trail: "Drill, baby, drill." He is an avowed friend of the fossil fuel industry, from whom he reportedly demanded $1 billion in campaign funds at a fundraising dinner last spring, promising in exchange to gut environmental regulations.

Vice President Harris is not exactly running on a platform of decarbonization, either. In an effort to win swing votes in the shale-boom heartland of Pennsylvania, she has reversed course on her past opposition to fracking, and she has proudly touted the record levels of oil and gas production seen under the current administration. Despite the risk of nuclear waste, the Biden administration has also championed nuclear power as a carbon-free solution and sought to incentivize the construction of new reactors through subsidies and loans. Although Harris says her administration would not be a continuation of Biden's, it's reasonable to expect continuity with Biden's overall approach of leaning more heavily on incentives for low-emissions energy than restrictions on fossil fuels to further a climate agenda.

--Gautama Mehta, environmental justice reporting fellow

Your home improvements

In 2022, the Biden administration handed the American people a great big carrot to incentivize them to decarbonize: the Inflation Reduction Act, or IRA. It provides thousands of dollars in the form of rebates and tax credits for a consumer to get an EV and electrify their home with solar panels, a heat pump and an induction stove. (Though the funding available for renters is slim, it is also out there.) In 2023, 3.4 million Americans got $8.4 billion in tax credits for home energy improvements thanks to the IRA.

If elected, Trump has pledged to rescind the remaining funding, which would require the support of Congress. By contrast, Harris has praised the law (which, as vice president, she famously cast the tie-breaking vote to pass) and would almost certainly veto any attempts by Congress to repeal it. As a presidential candidate, she has not said whether she would expand the law, though many expect she would focus on more efficient implementation.

But while repealing the IRA might slow the steady pace of American households decarbonizing, it can't stop what’s already in motion. "There are fundamental forces here at work," said Gernot Wagner, a climate economist at Columbia Business School. "At the end of the day, there's very little that Trump can do to stand in the way."

For one, the feds provide guidance to states on how to distribute the money made available through the IRA. More climate-ambitious states are already layering on their own monetary incentives to decarbonize. So even if that IRA money disappeared, states could pick up the slack.

And two, even before the IRA passed, market forces were setting clean energy on a path to replace fossil fuels. The price of solar power dropped by 90% between 2010 and 2020. And like any technology, electric appliances will only get cheaper and better. It might take longer without further support from the federal government, but the American home of tomorrow is, inevitably, fully electric — no matter the next administration.

--*Matt Simon, senior staff writer focusing on climate solutions*

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Your home insurance premiums

Whether they know it or not, many Americans are already confronting the costs of a warming world in their monthly bills: In recent years, home insurance premiums have risen in almost every state, as insurance companies face the fallout of larger and more damaging hurricanes, wildfires and hailstorms. In some states, like Florida and California, many prominent companies have fled the market altogether. While some Democrats have proposed legislation that would create a federal backstop for these failing insurance markets — with the goal of ensuring that coverage remains available for most homeowners — these proposals have yet to make much headway in a divided Congress. For the moment, it's state governments, rather than the president or any other national politicians, that have real jurisdiction over homeowner's insurance prices.

Near the end of the presidential debate in September, when both candidates were asked about what they'd do to "fight climate change," Harris began her response by referring to "anyone who lives in a state who has experienced these extreme weather occurrences, who now is either being denied home insurance or is being jacked up" as a way to counter Trump's denials of climate change.

Traditional homeowner policies don't include flood insurance, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency runs a flood insurance program that serves 5 million homeowners in the U.S., mostly along the East Coast. Homeowners in the most flood-prone areas are required to buy this policy, but uptake has been lagging in some particularly vulnerable inland communities — including those that were recently devastated by Hurricane Helene. Project 2025, which many experts believe will serve as the blueprint to a second Trump term (though his campaign disavows any connection to it), imagines FEMA winding down the program altogether, throwing flood coverage to the private market. This would likely make it cheaper to live in risky areas — but it would leave homeowners without financial support after floods, all but ensuring only the rich could rebuild.

--Jake Bittle, staff writer focusing on climate impacts and adaptation

(Grist/Marli Miller/UCG/Universal Images Group via Getty Images)

Your transportation

The appetite for infrastructure spending is so bipartisan that the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, signed in 2021, has become more widely known as the bipartisan infrastructure law. But don't be fooled. A wide gulf separates how Harris and Trump approach transportation, with potentially profound climate implications.

Harris hasn't offered many specifics, but she has committed to advancing the rollout out of the Biden administration's infrastructure agenda. That includes traditional efforts like building roads and bridges, mixed with Democratic priorities including union labor and an eye toward climate-resilience. The infrastructure law and the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act include billions in spending to promote the adoption of electric vehicles, produce them domestically and add 500,000 charging stations by 2030. They also include greener transportation efforts aimed at, among other things, electrifying buses, enhancing passenger rail and expanding mass transit. That said, Harris has not called for the eventual elimination of internal combustion vehicles despite such plans in 12 states.

Trump has also been sparse on details about transportation — his website doesn't address the issue except to decry Chinese ownership. During his first term and 2020 campaign, he championed (though never produced) a $1 trillion infrastructure plan. It focused on building "gleaming" roads, highways and bridges, and reducing the environmental review and government oversight of such projects. He has favored flipping the federal-first funding model to shift much of the cost onto states, municipalities and the private sector. Ultimately, Trump seems to have little interest in a transition to low-carbon transportation — the 2024 official Republican platform calls for rolling back EV mandates — and he remains a vocal supporter of fossil fuel production.

--*Tik Root Senior, staff writer focusing on the clean energy transition*

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Your health

Rising global temperatures and worsening extreme weather are changing the distribution and prevalence of tick- and mosquito-borne diseases, fungal pathogens and water-borne bacteria across the U.S. State and local health departments rely heavily on data and recommendations on these climate-fueled illnesses from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC — an agency whose director is appointed by the president and can be influenced by the White House.

In his first term, Trump tried to divorce many federal agencies' research functions from their rulemaking capacities, and there are concerns that, if he wins again in November, Trump would continue that effort. Project 2025, a sweeping blueprint developed by right-wing conservative groups with the aim of influencing a second Trump term, proposes separating the CDC's disease surveillance efforts from its policy recommendation work, meaning the agency would be able to track the effects of climate change on human health, like the spreading of infectious diseases, but it wouldn't be able to tell states how to manage them or inform the public about how to stay safe from them.

Harris is expected to leave the CDC intact, but she hasn't given many signals on how she'd approach climate and health initiatives. Her campaign website says she aims to protect public health, but provides no further clarification or policy position on that subject, or specifically climate change's influence on it. Over the past four years, the Biden administration has made strides in protecting Americans from extreme heat, the leading cause of weather-related deaths in the U.S. It proposed new heat protections for indoor and outdoor workers, and it made more than $1 billion in grant funding available to nonprofits, tribes, cities and states for cooling initiatives such as planting trees in urban areas, which reduce the risk of heat illness. It's reasonable to expect that a future Harris administration would continue Biden's work in this area. Harris cast the tie-breaking vote on the IRA, which includes emissions-cutting policies that will lead to less global warming in the long term, benefiting human health not just in the U.S. but worldwide.

But there's more to be done. Biden established the Office of Climate Change and Health Equity in the first year of his term, but it still hasn't been funded by Congress. Harris has not said whether she will push for more funding for that office.

> *--Zoya Teirstein, staff writer covering politics and the intersection between climate change and health*

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Your food prices

Inflation has cooled significantly since 2022, but high prices — especially high food prices — remain a concern for many Americans. Both candidates have promised to tackle the issue; Harris went so far as to propose a federal price-gouging ban to lower the cost of groceries. Such a ban could help smaller producers and suppliers, but economists fear it could also lead to further supply shortages and reduced product quality. Meanwhile, Trump has said he will tax imported goods to lower food prices, though analysts have pointed out that the tax would likely do the opposite. Trump-era tariff fights during the U.S.-China trade war led to farmers losing billions of dollars in exports, which the federal government had to make up for with subsidies.

Trump's immigration agenda could also affect food prices. If reelected, the former president has said he will expel millions of undocumented immigrants, many of whom work for low pay on farms and in other parts of the food sector, playing a vital role in food harvesting and processing. Their mass deportation and the resulting labor shortage could drive up prices at the grocery store. Meanwhile, Harris promises to uphold and strengthen the H-2A visa system — the national program that enables agricultural producers to hire foreign-born workers for seasonal work.

In the short term, it must be emphasized that neither candidate's economic plans will have much of an effect on the ways extreme weather and climate disasters are already driving up the cost of groceries. Severe droughts are one of the factors that have destabilized the global crop market in recent years, translating to higher U.S. grocery store prices. Warming has led to reduced agricultural productivity and diminished crop yields, while major disasters throttle the supply chain. Even a forecast of extreme weather can send food prices higher. These climate trends are likely to continue over the next four years, no matter who becomes president.

But the winner of the 2024 election can determine how badly climate change batters the food supply in the long run — primarily by controlling greenhouse gas emissions.

> *--Frida Garza, staff writer focusing on the impact of climate change on food and agriculture; Ayurella Horn-Muller, staff writer focusing on the impact of climate change on food and agriculture*

(Grist/Leonard Ortiz/MediaNews Group /Orange County Register via Getty Images)

Your drinking water

"I want absolutely immaculate, clean water," Trump said in June during the first presidential debate this election season. But if a second Trump presidency is anything like the first, there is good reason to worry about the protection of public drinking water.

During his first term in office, the Trump administration repealed the Clean Water Rule, a critical part of the Clean Water Act that limited the amount of pollutants companies could discharge near streams, wetlands and other sources of water used for public consumption. "It was ready to protect the drinking water of 117 million Americans and then, within a few months of being in office, Donald Trump and [former EPA administrator] Scott Pruitt threw it into the trash bin to appease their polluter allies," former Sierra Club Executive Director Michael Brune said in a press release.

While in office, Trump also secured a conservative majority on the Supreme Court, which last year tipped the court in favor of a decision to vastly limit the Environmental Protection Agency's power to regulate pollution in certain wetlands, forcing the agency to weaken its own clean water rules.

A Harris administration would likely carry forward the work of several Biden EPA measures to safeguard the public's drinking water from toxic heavy metals and other contaminants. For example, in April, the EPA passed the nation's first-ever national drinking water standard to protect an estimated 100 million people from a category of synthetic chemicals known as PFAS, or "forever chemicals," which have been linked to cancer, high blood pressure and immune system deficiencies. Enforcing the new standard will require the agency to examine test results from thousands of water systems across the country and follow up to ensure their compliance — an effort that will take place during the next White House administration.

"As president," Harris' website says, "she will unite Americans to tackle the climate crisis as she builds on this historic work, advances environmental justice, protects public lands and public health, increases resilience to climate disasters, lowers household energy costs, creates millions of new jobs, and continues to hold polluters accountable to secure clean air and water for all." Project 2025, the policy plan drawn up by former Trump staffers to guide a second Trump administration's policies, indicates that a future Trump administration would eliminate safeguards like the PFAS rule that place limits on industrial emissions and discharges.

Just this month, the EPA issued a groundbreaking rule requiring water utilities to replace virtually every lead pipe in the country within 10 years. With funds from Biden's bipartisan infrastructure law, the agency will also invest $2.6 billion for drinking water upgrades and lead pipe replacements. Harris has previously spoken out about the dangers of lead pipes, stating at a press conference in 2022 that lead exposure is "an issue that we as a nation should commit to ending."

The success of these and other measures will rely on a well-staffed EPA enforcement division, which may end up being one of the most insidious stakes of this election for environmental policies. Budget cuts and staff departures during the first Trump administration gutted the EPA's enforcement capacity — a problem that the agency has spent the past four years trying to mend. Project 2025 "would essentially eviscerate the EPA," said Stan Meiburg, who served as acting deputy administrator for the EPA from 2014 to 2017.

> *--Lylla Younes, senior staff writer covering chemical pollution, regulation and frontline communities*

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Your clean air

President Biden's clean air policy has been characterized by a spate of new rules to curb toxic air pollution from a variety of facilities, including petroleum coke ovens, synthetic manufacturing facilities and steel mills. While environmental advocates have decried some of these regulations as insufficiently protective, certain provisions — such as mandatory air monitoring — were hailed as milestones in the history of the agency's air pollution policy. Former EPA staffer and air pollution expert Scott Throwe told Grist that a Harris- and Democratic-led EPA would continue to build on the work of the past four years by enforcing these new rules, which will require federal oversight of state environmental agencies' inspection protocols and monitoring data.

Project 2025 proposes a major reorganization of the EPA, which would include the reduction of full-time staff positions and the elimination of departments deemed "superfluous." It also promotes the rollback of a range of air quality regulations, from ambient air standards for toxic pollutants to greenhouse gas emissions from coal-fired power plants.

What's more, a growing body of research has found that poor air quality is often concentrated in communities of color, which are disproportionately close to fossil fuel infrastructure. Conservative state governments have pushed back against the Biden EPA's efforts to address "environmental justice" through agency channels and in court — efforts that will likely enjoy more executive support under a second Trump administration.

> --*Lylla Younes, senior staff writer covering chemical pollution, regulation and frontline communities*

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Your public lands

Under the Antiquities Act of 1906, a national monument can be created by presidential decree. The act can be a useful tool to protect important landscapes from industries like oil, gas and even green energy enterprises. Tribal nations have asked numerous presidents to use this executive power to protect tribal homelands that might fall within federal jurisdiction. During his first term, Trump argued that the act also gives the president the implicit power to dissolve a national monument.

In 2017, Trump drastically shrunk two Obama-era designations, Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante in Utah, in what amounted to the biggest slash of federal land protections in the history of the United States. At the time, Trump said that "bureaucrats in Washington" should not control what happens to land in Utah. While giving back local control was Trump's stated rationale, tribes in the area, like the Diné, Ute, Hopi and Zuni, had been working for years to protect the two iconic and culturally significant sites. Meanwhile, his decision opened up the land for oil and gas development. While not all tribal nations are opposed to oil and gas production, tribal environmental advocates are worried that a second Trump term will erode federal environmental regulations and commitments to progress in the fight against climate change.

Since 2021, the Biden administration has put more than 42 million acres of land into conservation by creating and expanding national monuments. This includes the Baaj Nwaavjo I'tah Kukveni, a new monument spanning a million acres near the Grand Canyon — the kind of protection that tribal activists for years had worked to prevent industrial uranium mining. And just this month, Biden announced the creation of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary — a 4,500-square-mile national marine sanctuary to be "managed with tribal, Indigenous community involvement."

But Harris might not continue that legacy. While she has remained silent about what she would do to protect lands, she has been vocal about continuing the U.S.'s oil and gas production as well as a push for more mining to help with the green transition — like copper from Oak Flat in Arizona and lithium from Thacker Pass in Nevada — both important places to tribal communities in the area. Tribes have been subjected to the adverse effects of the energy crisis before — namely dams that destroyed swaths of homelands and nuclear energy that increased cancer rates of Southwest tribal members — and without specific protections, it's easy to see green energy as a changing of the guard instead of a game changer.

--Taylar Dawn Stagner, Indigenous affairs reporting fellow

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(Grist/Chandan Khanna/AFP via Getty Images)

Your next climate disaster

Congress controls how much money the Federal Emergency Management Agency receives for relief efforts after catastrophic events like hurricanes Helene and Milton, but the president holds significant sway over who receives money and when. A second Trump administration would likely curtail some of the climate-focused resiliency projects FEMA has pursued in recent years, such as cutting back money for infrastructure that would be more resilient against hazards like sea level rises, fires and earthquakes. Republican firebrands, like Rep. Scott Perry from Pennsylvania, have decried these projects as wasteful and unnecessary.

Under the Stafford Act, which governs federal disaster response, the president has the power to disburse relief to specific parts of the country after any "major disaster" — hurricanes, big floods, fires. In September, Trump suggested that he might make disaster aid contingent on political support if he returns to office, promising to withhold wildfire support from California unless state officials give more irrigation water to Central Valley farmers. Harris has not given an explicit indication of how she would fund climate-resiliency or disaster-response programs, though she has boosted FEMA's recovery efforts following Helene and Milton.

--Jake Bittle, staff writer focusing on climate impacts and adaptation

Your understanding of climate change

The United States has long been a leader in research essential to understanding — and responding to — a warming world. The government plays a key role in advancing climate science and providing timely meteorological data to the public. Neither Trump nor Harris address this in their platform, but history yields clues to what their presidency might mean for this vital work.

Trump has consistently dismissed climate change as a "hoax" and downplayed scientific consensus that it is anthropogenic, or driven by human activities. As president, he gutted funding for research, appointed climate skeptics and industry insiders, and eliminated scientific advisory committees from several federal agencies. Thousands of government scientists quit in response. (In fact, still reeling from Trump's attacks, new union contracts protect scientific integrity to combat such meddling.) His administration censored scientific data on government websites and tried to undermine the findings of the National Climate Assessment, the government's scientific report on the risks and impacts of climate change. If reelected, Trump would almost certainly adopt a similar strategy, deprioritizing climate science and potentially even restructuring or eliminating federal agencies that advance it.

Harris has long supported climate action; she co-sponsored the Green New Deal as a senator and, as vice president, cast the deciding vote to pass the Inflation Reduction Act, which bolstered funding for agencies that oversee climate research. As part of its "whole of government" approach to the crisis, the Biden administration created the National Climate Task Force, with the EPA, NASA and others to ensure science informs policy. Although Harris hasn't said much about climate change as a candidate, climate organizations generally support her campaign and believe her administration will build on the progress made so far.

--Sachi Kitajima, Mulkey Climate news reporting fellow

Your electric bill

A lot goes into calculating the energy rates you see on your monthly electric bill — construction and maintenance of power plants, fuel costs and much more. It's pretty tough to draw a direct line from the president to your bill, so if you're worried about your energy costs, you'd do well to read up on your local public utility commission, municipal electric authority or electric membership cooperative board.

What the president can do, though, is appoint people to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, or FERC — the board of up to five individuals who regulate the transmission of utilities across the entire country. As the U.S. continues to shift away from fossil fuels, a fundamental problem stands in the way: The country's aging and fragmented grid lacks the capacity to move all of the electricity being generated from renewable sources. In May, FERC, which currently has a Democratic majority, approved a rule to try to solve that issue; it voted to require that regional utilities identify opportunities for upgrading the capacities of existing transmission infrastructure and that regional grid operators forecast their transmission needs 20 years into the future. These steps will be essential for utility companies to take advantage of the subsidies offered in the IRA and bipartisan infrastructure law.

The rule is facing legal challenges, which like much else in U.S. courts, appear to be political. So even if Harris wins November's election, and maintains a commission that prioritizes the transition away from fossil fuels, the oil and gas industry and the politicians who support it will not acquiesce easily. If Trump wins, he'd have the chance to appoint a new FERC chair from among the current commissioners and to appoint a new commissioner in 2026, when the current chair's term ends. (Or possibly sooner.) Although FERC's actions tend to be more insulated from changes in the White House because commissioners serve five-year terms, a commission led by new Trump appointees would most likely deprioritize initiatives that would upgrade the grid to support clean energy adoption. Trump's appointees supported fossil fuel interests on several fronts during his previous term, for instance by counteracting state subsidies to favor coal and gas plants.

--Emily Jones, regional reporter, Georgia; Izzy Ross, regional reporter, Great Lakes

(Grist/Mario Tama/Getty Images)

Your trash

Some 33 billion pounds of plastic waste enter the marine environment globally every year, and the problem is expected to worsen as the fossil fuel and petrochemical industries ramp up plastic production.

Perhaps the most important step the next president could take to curb plastic pollution is to push Congress to ratify and implement the United Nations' global plastics treaty, which is scheduled to be finalized by the end of this year. The Biden administration recently announced its support for a version of the treaty that limits plastic production, and, though Harris hasn't made any public comment about it, experts expect that her administration would support it as well. Meanwhile, a former Trump White House official told Politico this April that Trump — who famously withdrew the U.S. from the Paris Agreement in his first term — would take a "hard-nosed look" at any outcome of the plastics negotiations and be "skeptical that the agreement reached was the best agreement that could have been reached."

The Biden administration has also taken some positive steps to address plastic pollution domestically, including a ban on the federal procurement of single-use plastics. Experts expect that progress to continue under a Harris administration. In 2011, as California's attorney general, Harris sued plastic bottle companies over misleading claims that their products were recyclable. As a U.S. senator, she co-sponsored a Democratic bill to phase out unnecessary single-use plastic products.

Trump, meanwhile, does not have a strong track record on plastic. Although he signed a 2019 law to remove and prevent ocean litter, he has taken personal credit for the construction of new plastic manufacturing facilities and derided the idea of banning single-use plastic straws. And Trump's "drill, baby, drill" agenda could increase the extraction of fossil fuels used to make plastics.

--Joseph Winters, staff writer covering plastics, pollution, and the circular economy

Your votes

After decades of failed attempts to tackle the climate crisis, Congress finally passed major legislation two years ago with the Inflation Reduction Act. Not a single Republican voted for it.

Elections aren't just important for getting the legislative power needed to enact climate policies — they're also important for implementing them. The IRA and the bipartisan infrastructure law, another key climate-related law, are entering crucial phases for their implementation, particularly the doling out of billions of dollars for clean energy, environmental justice and climate resiliency. Trump, having vowed to rescind unspent IRA funds if elected, seems poised to hamper the law's rollout, slowing efforts to get the country using more clean energy.

But it's a mistake to imagine that only federal elections matter when it comes to climate change. Eliminating greenhouse gases from energy, buildings, transportation and food systems requires legislation at every level. In Arizona and Montana, for example, voters this year will elect utility commissioners, the powerful, yet largely ignored officials who play a crucial role in whether — and how quickly — the country moves away from fossil fuels. State legislators can also open the door to efforts to get 100 percent clean electricity, as happened in Michigan and Minnesota after the 2022 election. Even in a state like Washington with Democratic Gov. Jay Inslee, who once campaigned for the White House on a climate change platform, votes matter — climate action is literally on the ballot in November, when voters could choose to kill the state's landmark price on carbon pollution.

Depending on what happens with the presidential and congressional races, state and local action might be the best hope for furthering climate policy anyway.

--Kate Yoder, staff writer examining the intersections of climate, language, history, culture, and accountability

Your global outlook

During his first term, Trump pulled the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement, a global commitment to reduce the burning of fossil fuels in an effort to curb the worst impacts of climate change. "I was elected to represent the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris," he said from the Rose Garden of the White House in 2017. Trump didn't entirely abandon global climate discussions; his administration continued to attend global climate conferences, where it endorsed events on fossil fuels.

The Biden administration rejoined the Paris Agreement and pledged billions of dollars to combat climate change both domestically and abroad, but a second Trump administration would likely undo this progress. Trump says that he would pull out of the Paris Agreement again, and reportedly would also consider withdrawing the U.S. from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, a 1992 treaty that's the basis for modern global climate talks. Harris is expected, at least, to continue Biden's policies. Speaking from COP28 in Dubai last year, an annual United Nations climate gathering, she celebrated America's progress in tackling the climate crisis and petitioned for much more to be done. "In order to keep our critical 1.5 degree-Celsius goal within reach," she said, "we must have the ambition to meet this moment, to accelerate our ongoing work, increase our investments and lead with courage and conviction."

But both the Trump and Biden administrations achieved record oil and gas production during their time in office, and Harris opposes a ban on fracking. In order to make a dent in the climate crisis, whoever becomes president would have to reject that status quo and put serious money behind global promises to mitigate climate change. Otherwise, climate change-related losses will just continue to mount — already, they are expected to cost $580 billion globally by 2030.

--Anita Hofschneider, senior staff writer focusing on Indigenous affairs

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