

OBAMA LAYS OUT PROPOSALS ON CUTTING CARBON POLLUTION

President [Barack Obama](#) on Friday trumpeted new executive actions and public- and private-sector commitments aimed at cutting carbon pollution and improving energy efficiency, saying that climate change is real and must be addressed now.

In a speech at a Wal-Mart store in Mountain View, Calif., the president laid out a list of clean-energy objectives he can accomplish without Congress's help and touted corporate pledges to expand the deployment of solar power. He lamented the lack of cooperation from lawmakers on clean-energy issues but said he would make sure the federal government does its part.

President Barack Obama laid out new executive actions and public- and private-sector commitments aimed at cutting carbon pollution and improving energy efficiency. WSJ's Colleen McCain Nelson reports on the News Hub. Photo: AP.

"Unfortunately, Congress has not always been as visionary on these issues as we would like. It can be a little frustrating," said Mr. Obama, who was flanked by an assortment of Wal-Mart clothing and kitchen wares.

Wal-Mart, the nation's largest retailer, pledged Friday to double the number of solar-power generation projects at its stores and facilities by 2020.

Critics of Mr. Obama's climate-change push contend that new regulations are a pricey proposition, burdening businesses and ultimately costing jobs.

The initiatives are wide-ranging but small-bore—from training workers for jobs in the solar industry to strengthening commercial energy building codes and from making federal buildings more energy-efficient to setting new efficiency standards for walk-in coolers and freezers.

But administration officials argue that cumulatively, the efforts could have a significant effect. Dan Utech, special assistant to the president on energy and climate change, said the proposals would help cut pollution, save businesses money on energy bills and support working training programs across the country.

Mr. Obama argued that addressing climate change is imperative and ultimately would prove more cost effective.

"It will be good for the economy long term. And if we don't, that will be bad for the economy," the president said. "Rising sea levels, drought, more wildfires, more severe storms—those are bad for the economy."

The White House also released [a video](#) Friday touting the installation of solar panels on the first family's residence. The project, which is expected to pay for itself in energy savings over the next eight years, "helps demonstrate that historic buildings can incorporate solar energy and energy efficiency upgrades," White House spokesman Matt Leirich said.

Friday's announcements come on the heels of the release of the [National Climate Assessment](#), an extensive document that details far-reaching consequences of climate change. Mr. Obama and other administration officials have launched an all-hands-on-deck public-relations push aimed at convincing Americans that climate change is an urgent problem, though polls show that they face a steep challenge in the realm of public opinion.

John Podesta, counselor to the president, said at an event Thursday in New York that the ultimate goal should be to eliminate carbon emissions from energy production. Right now, carbon-emitting fossil fuels make up about 62% of the nation's electricity mix.

The nation must "ultimately move toward an electric system that is going to have to be literally carbon free," Mr. Podesta said.

The White House's focus on climate change has been met with a mix of Republican criticism and indifference, as GOP lawmakers have suggested that Mr. Obama should focus on more pressing priorities. The president isn't proposing any major legislative initiatives, and administration officials have acknowledged that the issue hasn't gotten traction in Congress.

The president, who was wrapping up a fundraising swing through California, also spoke Friday about the burgeoning solar industry, calling for expanded use of solar energy in homes, businesses and schools. Solar power has increased 418% during the past four years, but it still accounts for only 1.13% of total U.S. electricity, according to the Energy Information Administration.

While jabbing at lawmakers' unwillingness to address climate change, Mr. Obama praised the private sector's efforts to reduce pollution and improve energy efficiency, adding that it is the right thing to do for the planet and for companies' bottom lines.

The president announced more than 300 commitments from private companies and public-sector organizations to advance solar deployment. Companies including Wal-Mart, [Ikea](#) and [Apple](#) Inc. announced an assortment of pledges to increase solar generation at their facilities and in their supply chains. WinnCompanies, a manager of affordable multifamily housing, also committed to developing more solar capacity. Darien Crimmin, vice president of energy and sustainability for the company, praised the president's efforts to draw attention to these issues.

"If you're paying attention to climate change, it's good to see federal leadership trying to create new programs," he said.

—Amy Harder contributed to this article.