



TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Battle Born Collective, Justice Democrats, Sunrise Movement, and United We Dream
DATE: April 27, 2021
RE: **POTUS 100 Days Progress Report**

President Biden made major commitments to the American people rooted in his core promise to “restore the soul of the nation.” One hundred days into his administration, with unified Democratic control of Congress, strides have been made toward erasing the stain of the previous administration and setting the country on a different path. Regarding COVID-19, the administration’s actions on distributing and administering the vaccines are particularly laudable. Additionally, the American Rescue Plan was an important step toward stabilizing the country, and we applaud the administration for prioritizing its passage and not capitulating to Republican demands for insufficient relief.

But the intersecting challenges we face demand intentional governing to address what chief of staff Ron Klain identified as the [four overlapping crises](#)—the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic downturn, the climate crisis, and a national reckoning on racial equity. President Biden reiterated these priorities in his inaugural address and took several executive steps in his first few weeks in [office to address them](#).

Biden is falling behind the pace of 2009

There are limits to executive action, and the president has [underscored this himself](#). The most lasting way to secure change is through legislation. To date, the president has [signed eleven bills into law](#), and just one—the widely popular American Rescue Plan Act of 2021—can be characterized as major.

By this same point in 2009, President Obama had signed 14 bills into law—including the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Quite simply, this pace must quicken if we are to meaningfully address the challenges we face.

Progressives of every stripe organized hard to ensure that Joe Biden became the 46th president. What follows is our assessment of key elements of how the first 100 days of this administration have unfolded.

Satisfactory

COVID-19: Without question, the administration's highest marks are for its action in revamping the U.S.'s response to the pandemic. While imperfect, the American Rescue Plan's scale and scope were fitting for the moment.

Haaland nomination: We were proud to see the nomination and confirmation of Interior Secretary Deb Haaland. She will be a steadfast steward of the nation's public lands. Her perspective is desperately needed at an agency that, for too long, has ignored the input and meaningful consultation of this country's indigenous peoples.

Climate whole of government approach: President Biden's re-entry to the Paris Agreement and [commitment to reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions](#) by at least 50% by the end of the decade were both critical steps towards meeting our global responsibility in tackling the climate crisis. That being said, neither go far enough to meet the scale of the global crisis. The president has also created an Office of Domestic Climate Policy, given heads of agencies various directives to restore climate considerations in their missions, and has purged important [scientific advisory boards](#) of hostile actors. This whole of government approach to addressing the climate crisis was something progressives were strongly advocating for, and Biden's actions thus far are a welcome development. However, the real measure of Biden's success on climate still lays ahead with the upcoming infrastructure package. Overall, the inclusion of major climate provisions in the infrastructure bill is a significant step forward from the previous era's Democratic Party politics of pitting of "the environment vs jobs."

Afghanistan War: The president's announcement that he will withdraw all American troops from Afghanistan by this fall deserves praise. We are hopeful that the administration will work with our allies to actively monitor any humanitarian impacts from the NATO-aligned exit from the region. We appreciate Secretary Blinken's proactive showcase of continued diplomatic support. We would encourage the administration to work with Congress to revise or fully repeal the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force to prevent it from being used to justify any future military engagements.

Work In Progress/Needs Improvement

International COVID relief: The pandemic will not truly be over until it has been contained throughout the world. The U.S. has a moral responsibility to bring its resources to bear in that effort. We were glad to see the administration announced its intention to send additional resources and, eventually, vaccines to India. We encourage the administration to support the temporary waiver of some Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) rules proposed by India and South Africa at the World Trade Organization (WTO), during the COVID-19 emergency. This will allow countries to locally manufacture COVID-19 diagnostics, treatments, and vaccines, thereby increasing timely global access.

Climate investments: We were pleased to see climate streamlined throughout the president's American Jobs Plan, but the estimated spending is insufficient to adequately address the challenges posed by the climate crisis, especially with respect to infrastructure resiliency. The proposed \$2 trillion in [spending over the next eight years](#) falls far short of the amount of spending candidate-Biden proposed during the campaign—an accelerated \$2 trillion investment over *four years*. We are eager to see more expansive and aggressive climate investments. For example, progressives are calling for [at least \\$1 trillion in investments per year over the next decade to match the scale of the climate and economic crises](#) we face. The administration should also embrace the Civilian Conservation Corps bill proposed by Senator Ed Markey and Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez which would employ 1.5 million Americans.

Judicial restoration: The previous administration, in conjunction with then-Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, ran roughshod over the judiciary in this country. They made hundreds of lifetime appointments to the bench, and these appointees will wield outsized influence on the success or failure of any progressive policies passed in the coming decades. We were glad to see President Biden send his first slate of diverse judicial appointments to the Senate last week, but there has to be a more aggressive approach to restoring confidence in the federal judiciary. After years of McConnell stacking the federal courts with young, extreme ideologues, taking a hands-off approach is not an option. The Biden administration cannot wait until more Supreme Court seats are lost to extreme right-wing judges to take direly needed action. We must learn from the pain of not only losing Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg but having her seat filled with someone as unqualified as Justice Amy Coney Barrett. The president's [commission on reforming the Supreme Court](#) is one step, but it cannot be the last.

JCPOA: Reinitiating indirect negotiations with our allies and Iran over a potential restart of the nuclear agreement reached in 2015 was a positive development. We are hopeful that the administration will resist some bipartisan efforts at home and by some of our allies abroad to

thwart restoring the agreement. As the administration seeks to wind down other long-term engagements in the region, agreements like this will be crucial in undergirding the modern relationship the U.S. has with Iran and the surrounding countries.

Gun control: We were encouraged both by the president's [executive orders](#) and by his strong calls on Congress to act on gun control after yet another series of mass shootings that have taken place since he took office. By his own admission, the president knows these actions will not be enough to curb the problem. We are eager to see the administration take a more aggressive role in prodding Congress toward robust action, and not just action that can "get 60 votes" in the Senate.

Unsatisfactory

Health care: The American Rescue Plan was an important step towards moving the country out of the Covid-19 pandemic. But returning us to "normal" isn't good enough. The pandemic laid bare the dark reality that our health care system is broken. Even before the pandemic, it was no accident that the most talked about issue during the presidential debates was health care. President Biden campaigned on expanding coverage through a [public option](#) like Medicare but to date no such plan has materialized. Furthermore, the administration has made no commitments to include health care provisions such as reducing the Medicare eligibility age; expanding Medicare benefits to include hearing, dental and vision care; implementing a cap on out-of-pocket expenses under traditional Medicare; and negotiating lower drug prices for the program into the American Families Plan. Progressives are continuing to fight for Medicare for All, but covering Americans 55 and over is a critical step President Biden agreed to in the campaign and can take right now.

Child tax credit: The expansion of the child tax credit was one of the more transformative aspects of the American Rescue Plan. It's an aggressive anti-poverty measure with the potential to provide a semblance of economic stability to millions of Americans. The expansion must be made permanent, and we strongly encourage the White House to work with allies in Congress to include this as part of the next phase of economic recovery.

Syria policy: We are deeply concerned that the [retaliatory strikes](#) carried out within Syria earlier this year were yet another step toward ever-escalating engagement in the country. We call on the administration to work with Congress to clearly and specifically outline goals, legal justifications, and humanitarian responses ahead of any future actions.

Refugee resettlement/asylum system: One of the key promises candidate-Biden made throughout the campaign was to ensure that the United States would once again become a

place where people could seek refuge with dignity and without fear. While we appreciate the need to be intentional in reestablishing a resettlement program that the previous administration decimated, we are troubled by continued administrative delays in beginning resettlement. The administration's [actions on April 16](#) regarding the caps on the number of refugees it will aim to resettle also did not inspire confidence. Furthermore, President Biden's continued use of Title 42 as an excuse to expel hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers at our borders is a harmful perpetuation of the previous administration's racist policies. President Biden must end the use of Title 42 and follow through on his promises to rebuild and grow our refugee and asylum systems.

Path to citizenship: The president unveiled a fairly ambitious immigration reform proposal shortly after being sworn in, and yet he has been conspicuously absent on the issue publicly ever since. This is unacceptable and untenable. True to form, Republicans have begun their chorus of harmful and xenophobic attacks on most proposals for paths to citizenship for undocumented immigrants in this country. President Biden has the opportunity to make progress on an issue that affects the lives of 11 million in this country who have been failed by our political system. He must show his commitment and meet the urgency of this issue by adding a pathway to citizenship for undocumented people in his infrastructure plan and pushing Congressional Democrats to pass it.

Minimum wage: President Biden and Vice President Harris must present their plan for [delivering on their campaign promise](#) of a \$15 minimum wage. We applauded the administration for including this critical priority in the American Rescue Plan but have been disappointed that they have not put any energy into lobbying Senate Democrats to make sure this important proposal becomes law.

Policing: The national reckoning on racial equity must include a national reckoning on law enforcement and how policing impacts different communities. In the increasingly frequent aftermath of police killings of Black and brown people, the president must resist his reflexive call for protesters to engage peacefully while ignoring the role heavily armed police forces play in escalating tensions and provoking violence. The president has a responsibility to lead a cultural and policy shift on this urgent matter. To date, he has failed to rise to the occasion.

Democracy reform: The issue of shoring up our democracy from bad faith attacks in Republican-controlled state legislatures is paramount. Democrats must get big money out of politics and take on Republican minority rule by eliminating partisan gerrymandering. Words of support for legislation like the For the People Act passed through the White House press secretary, while good, are woefully insufficient to address the onslaught. The right to vote must be secured, and Democrats have a responsibility to ensure that over 700,000 tax-paying

residents in DC finally enjoy the benefits of statehood. We know that Republicans will filibuster both, and that cannot be an excuse for inaction. This truly existential issue is going to require presidential leadership beyond passing comments and one-off answers to questions from reporters. On this specific front, dire performance improvement is urgently necessary.

What happens next is ultimately up to President Biden. Many in the administration have even compared Biden's goals to have delivered a domestic agenda comparable to the achievements of FDR and LBJ. FDR created Social Security, LBJ created Medicare and Medicaid. To achieve that goal, Biden needs big, everlasting programs to really make an impact in people's lives ahead of the midterms and to cement his legacy for multiple generations. It will be on him to move recalcitrant Democrats and prioritize big, bold, and popular legislation in the next stage of his presidency. Here's what we recommend for him to get there:

Message: The government CAN deliver results. The crisis of COVID-19 presented the administration and Democrats in Congress a once in a generation opportunity to reorient the federal government toward helping people in a tangible way. The [massive popularity](#) of the American Rescue Plan shows that a relentless focus on helping people and communicating effectively can yield dividends. The simple relief that people have gotten from getting their vaccines is a phenomenon that can be replicated across many issues. The government can and should help. The president and Democrats in Congress must embrace this mantra and deploy "shots in arms and money in pockets" style messaging to every priority.

Wield the majority. With the American Jobs Plan likely coming together in committees of jurisdiction before any real floor action in the next 2-3 months, the prospect of a lost legislative summer is real. The House has passed a slew of popular legislation that awaits Senate consideration—including [the Equality Act](#), a measure the president committed to signing in his first 100 days. President Biden should urge Leader Schumer to use the work periods in May, June, and July to bring House-passed legislation to the floor for debate. If Republicans are really interested in bipartisanship, let *them* prove it by working with the majority party, not the other way around. The first time 50 Democrats agree on a proposal that Republicans decide to obstruct, the president must urge Senate Democrats to abolish the filibuster once and for all and wield the majority Americans awarded to them in the last election.

Move quickly. Back in February, [we asked](#) what this period of unified control would have to show for itself. While the steps to tackle COVID cannot be undercounted, there is so much more to be done and so little time to do it. At the conclusion of this week, the Senate will have less than 100 legislative session days scheduled before the end of 2021. The clock is running out.

The president campaigned on and was elected to achieve particularly ambitious goals in his first 100 days in office. The result? A decisive blow has been struck against COVID, but a laundry list of open items remains. President Biden has said time and again that he wishes his presidency to be a truly consequential one. We want that too, and the country needs it. The longer bipartisan political theater supplants substantive progress on the crises facing America, the worse off the country will be, and the likelier it is that voters sour on Democrats by the time next fall rolls around.

TL;DR: The honeymoon is over. Let's go, Joe.