

Obama to Unveil Climate Plan in Tuesday Speech

JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama is preparing to unveil his long-awaited national plan to combat climate change in a major speech, he announced on Saturday.

"There's no single step that can reverse the effects of climate change," Obama said in an online video released by the White House. "But when it comes to the world we leave our children, we owe it to them to do what we can."

People consulting with White House officials on Obama's plan, to be unveiled Tuesday at Georgetown University, say they expect him to put forth regulations on heat-trapping gases emitted by existing coal-fired power plants. They were not authorized to disclose details about the plan ahead of the announcement and requested anonymity.

Environmental groups have been pleading with Obama to take that step, but the administration has said it's focused first on controls on new power plants. The Environmental Protection Agency, using its authority under the Clean Air Act, has already proposed controls on new plants, but the rules have been delayed — to the chagrin of states and environmental groups threatening to sue over the delays.

An administration official said last week that Obama was still weighing whether to include existing plants in the climate plan. The official wasn't authorized to comment by name and requested anonymity.

The White House wouldn't disclose any details Saturday about what steps Obama may call for. But his senior energy and climate adviser, Heather Zichal, said last week that controls on greenhouse gas emissions from power plants would be a major focus. She also said the plan would boost energy efficiency of appliances and buildings, plus expand renewable energy.

Putting a positive spin on a contentious partisan issue, Obama said the U.S. is uniquely poised to deal with the serious challenges posed by climate change. He said American scientists and engineers would have to design new fuels and energy sources, and workers will have to adapt to a clean energy economy.

"We'll need all of us, as citizens, to do our part to preserve God's creation for future generations," Obama said.

Environmental groups have for months been pushing Obama to make good on a threat he issued to lawmakers in February in his State of the Union address: "If Congress won't act soon to protect future generations, I will." Obama's move to take the matter into his own hands appears to reflect a growing consensus that opposition in Congress is too powerful for any meaningful, sweeping climate

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legislation to pass anytime soon.

"They shouldn't wait for Congress to act, because they'll be out of office by the time that Congress gets its act together," Rep. Henry Waxman, the top Democrat on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, said in an interview.

Environmental groups applauded the announcement that Obama was finally releasing a plan for executive action, but made clear they want to see firm proposals — including controls for existing power plants.

"Combating climate change means curbing carbon pollution — for the first time ever — from the biggest single source of such dangerous gases: our coal-fired power plants," said Frances Beinecke, president of the National Resources Defense Council. "We stand ready to help President Obama in every way we can."

Another key issue hanging over the announcement — but unlikely to be mentioned on Tuesday — is Keystone XL, a pipeline that would carry oil extracted from tar sands in western Canada to refineries along the Texas Gulf Coast. A concerted campaign by environmental activists to persuade Obama to nix the pipeline appears to be an uphill battle. The White House insists the State Department is making the decision independently.

Obama's speech on Tuesday will come the day before he leaves for a weeklong trip to three African nations.

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