

## STATEMENTS

### Heritage Foundation Experts Respond to Ill-Advised Biden Executive Orders

Jan 20, 2021 9 min read

WASHINGTON – President Joe Biden has pledged to sign more than a dozen executive orders in the first hours of his presidency. Some of these orders will have devastating impacts on American families and businesses, while others will undermine America’s national security and sovereignty.

“I am disappointed in the unprecedented scope and nature of today’s upcoming executive actions,” said Heritage Foundation President Kay C. James in a statement. “The American people want a president who puts their interests first and works with lawmakers in both parties on solutions. With these initial actions, the Biden administration has already signaled that it will take unilateral steps that usurp Congress’ power with divisive policies that will leave Americans less secure and limit their economic opportunities.

The Heritage Foundation has released the following rundown as a comprehensive source of analysis for these ill-advised orders. Heritage analysts listed below are available for interviews this week. To arrange an interview, email [heritagepress@heritage.org](mailto:heritagepress@heritage.org).

#### Foreign Policy and National Security:

Rejoining WHO: “The failing of the WHO during the COVID-19 outbreak cannot be allowed to recur. Without key changes, the WHO will fail the world, especially the neediest, once again.” Rejoining the WHO will not ensure that the organization changes. In fact, it could send the opposite message – that the U.S. is satisfied with the status quo – unless rejoining is linked to reforms. President Biden should demand firm, public commitments from other nations to support reforms to the WHO. Among them, the Health Emergency Program, which is at the heart of the WHO’s pandemic response, must be independent and insulated from political pressure and WHO resources should be reallocated to more effectively address the current pandemic and future pandemics. – Brett Schaefer, senior research fellow

Travel Ban: There’s been a lot of misinformation about President Trump’s travel restrictions. The facts: “After an extensive and in-depth review of all threats posed by individuals from

foreign countries by the DHS and the State Department, the President [initially] restricted entry from eight countries—Chad (later removed from the list), Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen—that were state sponsors of terrorism, provided safe havens for terrorists, or provided insufficient information to U.S. authorities...Chief Justice John Roberts, writing for the majority, stated that...the President ‘undoubtedly fulfilled’ the requirement in the statute that he determine if the entry of covered aliens would be “detrimental” to the interests of the country and our national security.” – Lora Ries, senior research fellow for homeland security

Border Wall: Critics mocked Trump’s push for a border wall, but the numbers show it’s helped secure the border: “What distinguishes the border effort is both the effectiveness of the wall and its location. The barriers being built now are not only more robust, but the administration also has put walls where the Border Patrol says it really needs them to block the most prevalent and dangerous smuggling corridors into the United States. It’s without question that the wall has been effective.” – James Carafano, Heritage VP for national security and foreign policy, Lora Ries, and Mike Howell, senior advisor for executive branch relations

Sanctuary Cities: By removing consequences for sanctuary cities, President Biden is making our cities more dangerous: “Sanctuary laws—though intended to show compassion for those here illegally—put citizens and others legally present at unnecessary risk. They wind up creating sanctuaries for criminal activity...[Withholding funding from sanctuary cities] is not a war on illegal immigrants. It is a campaign to stop all the foolish policies put in place by federal, state, and local governments that created a shadow America where human trafficking and exploitation flourished.” – James Carafano, Lora Ries, and Mike Howell

DACA: DACA is amnesty, plain and simple. “No president has the power to override existing immigration law and establish a general administrative amnesty for illegal immigrants, even providing them with government benefits. Pursuing a legislative amnesty, however, is not only unnecessary but unwise. It would make our southern border less secure, cause even more foreigners to overstay their visas, and act as an incentive to attract even more illegal immigrants to the country.” – Lora Ries and Hans von Spakovsky, senior legal fellow

### Domestic Policy:

Mask Mandates: Heritage recently examined the effects of mask mandates in the U.S. and Italy, and our findings are not encouraging. Instead of focusing on mask mandates, which

many localities already have anyway, President Biden should focus on more effective responses. “Although mask-wearing may reduce transmission rate, it has not prevented cases from spiking either here or abroad. Governments should pursue additional strategies. These include adopting better measures to protect nursing home residents and enabling nationwide screening through the widespread use of rapid self-tests.” – Doug Badger, visiting fellow

Student Loan Forgiveness: “Forgiving” student loans sounds compassionate on the surface, but is actually a radically unfair policy. “However, in responding to the coronavirus pandemic, policies needed to be targeted and temporary. And they needed to be responsive to the current state of the economy and the current state of the fight against coronavirus. And so, extending the suspension of student loan payments does not meet that targeted and temporary standard. I fear that extending the suspension of student loan forgiveness will only open the door for large-scale loan forgiveness down the road coming from the left.” – Mary Clare Amselem, policy analyst

New Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity “Protections:” Heritage Foundation experts have long opposed the expansion of anti-discrimination laws to elevate “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” as protected classes. “It doesn’t take a crystal ball to know how Biden administration officials will interpret and apply these policies: men who identify as women must be allowed in women-only spaces, boys who identify as girls must be allowed to compete in the girls’ athletic competitions, healthcare plans must pay for gender-transition procedures, doctors and hospitals must perform them, adoption agencies may not seek only married moms and dads to care for children in need.” – Ryan Anderson, senior research fellow, and Emilie Kao, director of the DeVos Center for Religion & Civil Society

Eviction and Foreclosure Moratoriums: Eviction moratoriums can actually hurt the very people they’re intended to help, not to mention undermine the government’s role in enforcing contracts. “As the shutdowns ease and federal COVID-19 benefits begin to expire, Congress is looking to extend the federal moratoriums. Far-left activists demand even more, including rent forgiveness even without proof of hardship on the part of the renter and with possibly no government reimbursement to the landlord by the government. Forcing property owners to provide free housing is a subtle form of expropriation of private property without just compensation. Politicians may enjoy a short-term boost in popularity from such measures. However, the unintended consequences are extensive.” – Joel Griffith, research fellow

**Rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement:** Rejoining the Paris climate agreement will mean devastating economic costs, but essentially zero environmental benefits. To have any impact whatsoever on climate, the entire world would either have to quickly change the way it consumes energy or simply remain undeveloped. Both options are devoid of reality. “Policies adapted from domestic regulations emphasized in the Paris agreement will affect a variety of aspects of the American economy. Based on regulations and emissions reduction targets set by the Obama administration, Heritage economists estimate that by 2035 there will be: an annual average loss of nearly 400,000 jobs, a total income loss of more than \$20,000 for a family of four, and an aggregate GDP loss of over \$2.5 trillion – all for a few tenths of a degree Celsius in abated warming.” – Nick Loris, deputy director of the Roe Institute for Economic Policy Studies

**Keystone XL Pipeline:** Revoking the Keystone permit defies environmental and economic logic – it’s nothing more than virtue-signaling. “The decision to revoke the Keystone XL permit will be a poor economic and environmental decision. The climate impact of the pipeline will be practically undetectable, as confirmed by the Obama administration’s Environmental Protection Agency and State Department’s environmental impact assessment. Blocking Keystone XL isn’t going to stop the production of Canadian oil or prevent oil from reaching refiners in Texas and Louisiana. Instead, prohibiting the pipeline will create more inefficient and riskier methods of transporting crude, whether that is more tankers from overseas or carrying Canadian crude by truck or rail. At a time when economic growth and job creation are desperately needed, is the administration going to dismiss so many thousands of well-paying, shovel-ready construction jobs?” – Nick Loris and Katie Tubb, senior policy analyst

**Fuel Economy Standards:** The best fuel economy standard is zero. “Every time the federal government has cranked up fuel-efficiency mandates, they override consumer preferences and obscure price signals that tell energy producers to drill for more oil or entrepreneurs to invest in more fuel-efficient cars. Fuel-economy standards drive up the sticker price of vehicles by thousands of dollars. Those prices ripple throughout the entire vehicle market, pricing many buyers out. The global temperature impact would be practically immeasurable. Even the Obama administration’s more stringent standards would have abated less than two-hundredths of a degree Celsius of warming by 2100, by their own estimate.” – Nick Loris

**Moratorium on Oil And Natural Gas Leasing Activities In ANWR:** The climate impacts of oil and gas production on federal lands, and of energy production in the United States broadly,

are negligible. “[B]locking energy development on federal lands and increasing regulations on existing wells would increase costs and strip opportunities away from businesses for minimal environmental benefit. Western states, Gulf Coast states, and Alaska, who have long viewed energy development as an integral part of their states’ economy and budget, would suffer.” – Nick Loris and Katie Tubb

Counting Non-citizens for the U.S. Census: Not including illegal aliens in the U.S. Census count for apportionment is both fair and legal. It has been a standard practice for much of our history to determine the number of non-citizens in the country: “We need accurate information on our population — including the number of non-citizens — for many different reasons. That includes the distribution of federal funds, the drawing of political boundary lines for state legislative and congressional seats, and the formation of our nation’s immigration policy. There have been 23 decennial censuses since 1790. All but one between 1820 and 2000 asked at least some portion of the population about their citizenship or place of birth.” – Hans von Spakovsky

1776 Commission: The work of the commission is to replace the poisonous and divisive views about American history with information that is not only historically accurate, but which seeks to define and portray America and her founding principles fairly and truthfully. “It beggars belief that in one of its first acts, [Biden’s] White House took down the report issued Monday by the 1776 Commission, and on his first day as president, Biden has disbanded the commission. Is that really such a priority?” – Mike Gonzalez, senior fellow  
You Might Also Like

Heritage Legal Expert Reacts to House Impeachment Vote

Dec 19, 2019 1 min read

Heritage Expert: Latest Omnibus Deal a Letdown for the American People

Feb 14, 2019 1 min read