

"We're in a crisis": Biden introduces climate policy team

BY GRACE SEGERS

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President-elect Joe Biden on Saturday issued a dire warning on climate change as he announced the nominees who will shape his environmental team. Mr. Biden stressed the need for the U.S. to reenter the Paris climate agreement and discussed how the country has often failed to protect low-income communities from environmental hazards.

"We're in a crisis," Mr. Biden said. "Just like we need to be a unified nation in response to COVID-19, we need a unified national response to climate change. We need to meet the moment with the urgency it demands, as you would during any national emergency. "

While Mr. Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris both highlighted the Biden administration's ambitious agenda, Mr. Biden insisted they are not

proposing "pie in the sky dreams, these are Mr. Biden tied the need to address climate change to "environmental justice," saying it's been "generations" since the country fulfilled the "basic obligation" to provide every American with clean air and safe drinking water.

Mr. Biden touted the diversity of his Cabinet nominees, saying there are at least 12 historic appointments, including Congresswoman Deb Haaland, who if confirmed, would be the first Native American to lead the Interior Department.

Haaland, who tweeted earlier this week that a "voice like mine has never been a Cabinet secretary or at the head of the Department of Interior," said that growing up in her mother's Pueblo household made her "fierce."

"This moment is profound when we consider the fact that a former secretary of the Interior once proclaimed his goal to 'civilize or exterminate [Native Americans],'" Haaland said. "I am a living testament to the failure of that horrific ideology."

In addition to Haaland, Mr. Biden introduced further nominees: Jennifer Granholm as Secretary of Energy, Michael Regan as Environmental Protection Agency administrator, Brenda Mallory for Chair of

the Council on Environmental Quality, Gina McCarthy as national climate adviser and Ali Zaidi as deputy national climate adviser. Mr. Biden has previously announced John Kerry will serve as the special presidential envoy for climate.

Granholm previously served as the governor of Michigan, and is a vocal advocate for clean energy, as Mr. Biden looks to transition the U.S. away from fossil fuels.

Granholm said Saturday that she is "obsessed" with "creating good-paying jobs in America in a global economy" and "seizing the opportunities that a clean energy economy will provide for workers."

Regan, who would be the first Black man to lead the EPA if confirmed, stressed that environmental protection and economic prosperity go "hand in hand."

"We're going to ensure that the EPA is once again a strong partner for the states, not a roadblock," Regan said. "We will be driven by our convictions that every person in our great country has the right to clean air, clean water and a healthier life, no matter how much money they have in their pockets, the color of their skin or the community that they live

in."

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