

Biden's big 3: What the president said about his American Rescue, Jobs and Families Plans

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President Joe Biden devoted a large portion of his first address to a joint session of Congress to his three major spending initiatives – the American Rescue Plan, his \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill, the American Jobs Plan, Biden's \$2.3 trillion infrastructure bill, and the newly unveiled American Families Plan, a \$1.8 trillion investment which includes free community college and universal preschool, tax breaks for working families and paid leave.

Biden's ambitious plans, which add up to approximately \$6 trillion, have met resistance from Republicans – despite passage of the American Rescue Plan, it did not receive a single vote of GOP support in either chamber of Congress.

And Republicans have already balked at the amount of spending in the president's proposals. In his rebuttal to Biden's address, Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina called Biden's infrastructure plan a "liberal wish-list of big government waste."

Despite that opposition, Biden and Democratic leadership have pledged to press on with the president's agenda. The president has also signaled a willingness to work with Republicans on his other major initiatives, going as far as to applaud Republican Senators for submitting an infrastructure in his address.

Here's what Biden said about each of his major policy initiatives during his address to a joint session of Congress.

The American Rescue Plan

“After just one hundred days, I can report to the nation: America is on the move again,” Biden said about turning the tide against the COVID-19 pandemic. “Turning peril into possibility. Crisis into opportunity. Setback into strength.”

The progress, he said, is thanks in large part to the passage of his \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan, whose funding allowed the White House to meet — and exceed — its goal of administering 200 million vaccines within 100 days.

Calling it “one of the most consequential rescue packages in American history,” the president said of the package: “We’re already seeing the results.”

“After I promised 100 million COVID-19 vaccine shots in 100 days – we will have provided over 220 million COVID shots in 100 days,” he said. “We’re marshalling every federal resource. We’ve gotten the vaccine to nearly 40,000 pharmacies and over 700 community health centers.”

Biden also said both Democrats and Republicans delivered on their promise to send \$1,400 checks to the vast majority of American families via the American Rescue Plan, although more progressive members of his own party advocated for a \$2,000 stimulus check.

As of Wednesday, the IRS sent out nearly 163 million Economic Impact Payments.

The president made mention of how one of the defining images of pandemic for him has been people lined in their cars at food drives, adding, “I didn’t know I’d ever see that in America.”

“That’s why the American Rescue Plan is delivering food and nutrition assistance to millions of Americans facing hunger – and hunger is down sharply already,” he said.

Biden also touted that the plan allowed for 800,000 Americans to sign up for health care by enrolling in the Affordable Care Act, rental assistance, eviction protection and “maybe most importantly, thanks to the American Rescue Plan, we are on track to cut child poverty in America in half this year.”

The American Jobs Plan

Biden touted the 1.3 million new jobs created in his first 100 days, as the economy springs back to life, and called on Congress to pass his American Jobs Plan to help put others back to work but also to assist in the fight against climate change.

“For too long, we fail to use the most important word when it comes to meeting the climate crisis: jobs, jobs, jobs,” the president said.

Biden called the plan “a once-in-a-generation investment in America itself” and “the largest jobs plan since World War II.”

The president's plan would create jobs upgrading transportation infrastructure, modernizing highways, roads and bridges and building ports, airports and rail lines – as well as replacing lead pipes, ensuring clean drinking water and providing broadband internet to all Americans.

Last week, Biden announced plans to cut U.S. greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030. Many Republicans have blasted the goal as being a jobs killer.

But Biden insisted it doesn't have to be the way.

"There is simply no reason why the blades for wind turbines can't be built in Pittsburgh instead of Beijing," the president said. "No reason."

Biden added that new climate-friendly industries can also create jobs for engineers, construction workers and electrical workers, among others.

"Electrical workers installing 500,000 charging stations along our highways. Farmers planting cover crops, so they can reduce carbon dioxide in the air and get paid for doing it," he continued. "There's no reason the blades for wind turbines can't be built in Pittsburgh instead of Beijing."

Biden said that his jobs plan will be "guided by one principle: 'Buy American.'"

"American tax dollars are going to be used to buy American products made in America to create American jobs," he said. "That's the way it's supposed to be, and it will be in this administration."

He added that 90% of the infrastructure jobs in his plan do not require a college degree, and 75% don't require an associate's degree.

"The American Jobs Plan is a blue collar blueprint to build America," Biden said.

Biden said that his plan "will help millions of people get back to their jobs and back to their careers."

"Two million women have dropped out of the workforce during this pandemic. Two million. And too often, because they couldn't get the care they needed to care for their child or care for an elderly parent who needs help," Biden added.

The American Families Plan

President Joe Biden formally debuted his sweeping \$1.8 trillion "human infrastructure" plan during his address, the American Families Plan, an investment in domestic priorities including free community college, universal preschool and a comprehensive, nationwide paid leave program that would guarantee 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave.

"No one should have to choose between a job and paycheck or taking care of themselves and a loved one – a parent, spouse, or child," Biden said of the leave program.

The plan would address four key points, according to Biden: access to a good education, access to quality, affordable child care, providing up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave and putting money directly into the pockets of millions of families.

On the education front, Biden's plan calls for \$200 billion toward free "universal, high quality preschool" for all three- and four-year-olds and \$109 billion for two years of free community college, as well as billions in investments toward Pell Grants for low-income students, college retention and completion rates, and make an investment in HBCUs, TCUs and MSIs.

The plan also calls for \$9 billion for American teachers, including training and support, boosting diversity and addressing shortages.

Discussing his education proposals, Biden turned his attention to his wife, Dr. Jill Biden, who teaches community college while still serving as First Lady.

"Any country that out-educates us is going to outcompete us," Biden recounted what Dr. Biden often says to him, and noted that she will be leading the effort on education.

Biden also called for an extension of the Child Tax Credit through 2025 and make the credit permanently refundable, as well as other tax cuts in the American Rescue Plan which benefit lower- and middle-income workers and families.

The president also discussed his proposed tax hikes outlined in the plan, which he said "will only affect three tenths of 1% of all Americans."

"I will not impose any tax increases on people making less than \$400,000," Biden said. "But it's time for corporate America and the wealthiest 1% of Americans to pay their fair share. Just their fair share."

"I'm not looking to punish anybody," he added. "But I will not add a tax burden to the middle class"

"Sometimes I have arguments with my friends in the Democratic Party," Biden noted. "I think you should be able to become a billionaire or a millionaire. But pay your fair share."

The president pledged that "the IRS is going to crack down on millionaires and billionaires who cheat on their taxes."

"When you hear someone say they don't want to raise taxes on the wealthiest 1 percent or corporate America," Biden posed, "Ask them, whose taxes do you want to raise?"

In a stinging rebuke against the 2017 tax plan passed by his predecessor and Congressional Republicans, Biden said that "it was supposed to pay for itself. That was how it was sold. And generate vast economic growth."

"Instead, it added \$2 trillion to the deficit," Biden continued. "It was a huge windfall for corporate America and those at the very top. Instead of using the tax saving to raise wages and invest in research and development, it poured billions of dollars into the

pockets of CEOs. In fact the pay gap between CEOs and their workers is now among the largest in history.”

"My fellow Americans, trickle-down economics has never worked. It's time to grow the economy from the bottom up and middle-out."