

Climate change

Obama administration pays out \$500m to climate change project

The first chunk of a \$3bn commitment made at the Paris climate talks ‘shows the US stands squarely behind climate commitments’, the State Department said



Barack Obama at the Paris climate change talks in late 2015. His administration has pledged \$3bn towards climate change projects. Photograph: Reuters

The [Obama administration](#) has made a first installment on its \$3bn pledge to help poor countries fight climate change - defying Republican opposition to the president’s environmental plan.

The \$500m payment to the Green Climate Fund was seen as critical to shoring up international confidence in Barack Obama’s ability to deliver on the pledges made at the United Nations’ climate change conference in Paris in late 2015.

Obama is expected to announce a number of joint climate initiatives when Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau visits Washington this week, sources familiar with the plans said.

The White House is also working with United Nations officials to encourage countries to formally approve the Paris climate agreement ahead of a signing ceremony on 22 April.

At least 55 countries, representing at least 55% of global climate emissions, must ratify the agreement before it formally takes effect.

Administration officials said the initial \$500m payment to the Green Climate Fund demonstrated that Obama would follow through on the promises of last December’s Paris climate agreement - despite February’s [setback at the supreme court](#) and [threats by Republican presidential candidates](#) to dismantle Obama’s agenda.

“Today, the United States provided a \$500m grant to the Green Climate Fund,” a state department official said. “This grant is the first step toward meeting the president’s commitment of \$3bn to the GCF, and shows that the United States stands squarely behind our international climate commitments.”



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Administration officials described the payment as an important signal to the international community that Obama was pressing ahead on his climate agenda in his remaining months in the White House.

Obama has faced a number of recent setbacks to his climate agenda.

The supreme court last month agreed to [block the centerpiece of Obama’s climate plan](#) - new rules cutting emissions from power plants - until lower courts rule on legal challenges from 29 states and dozens of industry groups. The ruling created immediate uncertainty about the fate of the power plant rules and the Paris agreement.

Obama’s climate plan is also under political attack from Republican presidential contenders who say they will scrap the rules and dismantle the Environmental Protection Agency if they take the White House next November.

Republicans in Congress have also threatened to scrap the power plant rules and block any US contributions to the Green Climate Fund, which was set up in 2009 to help poor and vulnerable countries adopt cleaner energy technologies and protect their peoples from rising seas, droughts and other impacts of climate change.

At one point Republicans insisted that the Paris agreement be submitted to the Senate for approval before any funds were released - before quietly relenting during budget negotiations last December.

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