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OPINIONBUSINESS WORLD

# *Biden and the Media Are Electric-Vehicle Grifters*

If the president succeeds, global emissions will be 0.18% lower.



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Joe Biden drives a Cadillac Lyriq during a tour at an auto show in Detroit, Sept. 14, 2022. Photo: Evan Vucci/Associated Press

When I pestered a senior Biden climate official a few months ago about the counterintuitive argument that green handouts won't reduce fossil-fuel consumption, he surprised me by finishing my sentence. The only real solution is for governments "to put a price on carbon," he said, and speculated Democrats and Republicans might break the ice with a carbon-related import tax.

The point being, economic sanity exists everywhere except in the policies of the Biden administration and media coverage of them.

Unbidden in a recent Journal podcast, the Harvard economist Ken Rogoff spontaneously offered a similar assessment of the "craziness" of current policy in contrast with the only "sane thing that's going to work." Tyler Cowen, the author and economist, voiced the same

critique in a podcast with green investor Jeremy Grantham: “We make green energy much cheaper, but dirty energy becomes cheaper” and “the world just uses much more energy.”

Or take a Princeton analysis the Biden White House loves to cite. In its fine print, the analysis admits leaving out the emissions effect of lowered fossil-energy prices.

Subsidizing somebody to use an electric car is a subsidy to consume energy, period—to drive more, to live in a bigger house, to crank the air conditioning higher. The electricity to charge the car has to come from somewhere. The minerals for the battery don’t spring from the ground. If government pays you to use less fossil fuel, it’s paying someone else to use more.

But the funny thing is, even if sophisticated economics are lost on you, you still wouldn’t subsidize electric cars for consumers based simply on the numbers.

Transportation may be 20% of emissions, but cars and vans represent only 8%, and 72% of these are personal vehicles—which means they sit idle most of the time. Going by U.S. and European averages, commercial vehicles rack up four times the annual mileage. Global society’s personal vehicles may be a majority of cars, but they account for a minority of light-vehicle emissions—about 39%, or 3% of total emissions.

And, of course, the Biden plan affects only the U.S., with 12% of the global fleet—so 0.36%. And swapping out a gasoline engine for a battery eliminates only half (at best) of lifetime emissions—so 0.18%.

I could go on. When all factors are considered, such as the shrinking U.S. share of global emissions, such as the slow turnover of the U.S. auto fleet, the climate effect of the extravagantly expensive Biden plan will steadily approach zero as time goes on even without counting the signal to others to consume the fossil fuels that EV drivers allow to be available at a lower price.

Now you know why the Union of Concerned Scientists for years has practiced a sleight of hand, claiming “our personal vehicles are a major cause of global warming” and then segueing to talk about transportation emissions overall. Ditto the New York Times, which laughably oversells the Biden plan “to slash the greenhouse gases generated by cars, a major driver of climate change.”

These outlets plump for EV subsidies because their target demos like to hear about EV handouts but it’s not serious climate policy. It’s no more serious than the Obama fuel-

economy plan to give us 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025, shown in a subsequent investigation to be a sham “headline number” cooked up by the White House PR team.

If Americans want to cut emissions, they can enact a carbon tax, as the Biden adviser suggests (after being promised anonymity). This model other countries might adopt, in which case only then would emissions be placed on a noticeably lower path and possibly allow some climate effect to be detectable decades from now.

Make up your own mind whether such emissions reductions are worth pursuing but understand that the convoluted Biden plan is an EV fetish masquerading as a policy thought.

You may have a low opinion of Joe Biden. You may think he lacks the temperament to examine the second- and third-order effects of his own EV mandate. “EVs are good” might be reasoning enough for old Joe. But Barack Obama pushed similar policies and sailed majestically on, in his presidential afterlife, to sign a big production deal with Netflix and bask in permanent acclaim.

Which brings us to a sad realization. Mainstream liberals like Messrs. Biden and Obama and their colleagues in Congress, for quite a while now, have offered nothing except to treat the productive economy as a source of endless rents that can be extracted and redeployed to give evidence of their own good intentions, which then are parlayed into status and wealth opportunities for their families.

If this sounds cynical, also spare a thought for a news media that has ceased to function as a critic and instead champions policy ideas, no matter how theoretically expensive, purely as virtue signals. If you hoped for climate policy that might actually affect climate, the press perhaps is the ultimate place to point the finger.

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