

The world faces an indisputable plastic pollution crisis. More than 99% of plastic is created from chemicals sourced from fossil fuels, including an oversupply of fracked gas, which is spurring a global boom in new plastic production. That plastic is causing serious environmental problems at every step of its lifecycle.

Plastic production fuels the climate crisis with increased greenhouse gas emissions and damages local communities where plastic is made with toxic air and water pollution. Plastic is also a threat to human health: As we increasingly consume more and more of our food and drinks from single-use plastic wrappers and containers, we're exposed to chemicals linked to many of the known public health crises of our time, including obesity, ADD/ADHD, and many forms of cancer.

Once discarded, plastic clogs our rivers and oceans, harms wildlife, infiltrates our drinking water, and persists in the environment for centuries. Half of all plastics ever manufactured have been made in the last 15 years, and annual plastic pollution into rivers, lakes and oceans could surpass 50 million tons within the next 10 years unless significant policy changes are made. Banning bags and straws are important first steps taken by state and local governments, but we need bold new federal policies to address the plastic pollution crisis.

And despite false and misleading claims by the makers of plastics, we cannot recycle our way out of this problem. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. plastic recycling rate is an anemic 8%. Instead, more than 90% of plastics in the United States is buried, burned or released into the environment.

The solution to plastic pollution is simple: Reduce the amount of unnecessary plastic produced.

We can transform our extractive, throwaway economy to a regenerative, inclusive one that's good for our environment and creates American jobs.

We need to stop plastic contamination at its source before it enters the marketplace, while improving our waste-management systems, developing new business models, phasing out the worst plastic offenders, and shifting to reusable non-plastic alternatives. The federal government needs to be a catalyst for innovation. There is time to make this transition, but the question remains:

How can we make this large-scale transition quickly enough?

President Biden can take the following eight key steps without any action from Congress. These actions will *immediately* set the nation on a pathway to a plastic pollution-free future while longer-term measures that require action at all levels of government and society develop.

Each of the actions described requires the president to prioritize support for communities that historically have been harmed 'first and worst' by the petrochemical industrial sector and the waste it creates: communities of color, Indigenous communities, and impoverished communities. Moreover, these actions will provide an opportunity to drive job growth in a new green economy, providing unionized jobs with family-sustaining wages in communities that need them the most. Workers in the petrochemical sector and