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Former Obama Chief Of Staff On Pushing Climate Policy: 'You Might As Well Have Taken A Gun To Your Head And Shot Yourself'



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Former Obama chief of staff William Daley

On Tuesday, the third National Climate Assessment — a more than 1,000-page status report on climate change and its impacts in the United States — will be released at the White House.

The White House is planning a number of media events in the coming week to drum up support for the new report, including an [interview](#) with NBC Today's Al Roker and an event at the White House highlighting the report's results.

The media engagement is part of President Barack Obama's mission to make climate change a priority in his second term. It's a reversal from the administration's approach to climate policy during the president's first term — mainly because climate change has become a "third rail" in politics.

Before Obama's re-election in 2012, "the president's top aides were sharply divided on how aggressively to push climate policy," according to [The Washington Post's Juliet Eilperin](#).

"There was a sense then it just wasn't the sort of thing you could tee up in [2011], with an election coming up," William Daley, who served as Obama's chief of staff from 2011 to 2012, told Eilperin in an interview. **"With respect to my friends in the environment community, to put this at the front of the list, you might as well have taken a gun to your head and shot yourself."**

Now Obama is pushing to put climate change back on the national agenda. The president [devoted an entire paragraph](#) to the devastating effects of a warming planet in his re-election speech. At his State of the Union address, Obama declared "climate change is a fact." Last year, Obama issued the first-ever federal regulations to [cut carbon dioxide emissions from existing power plants](#). The report will guide Obama's environment policy over his next two years in office.

With the overwhelmingly negative impacts that climate change will have on humanity over the next century, we can only hope this change will result in some action.

A draft version of the report, developed by the National Climate Assessment and Development Advisory Committee, was released in January 2013.

The federal advisory committee will hold a meeting on Tuesday morning to consider final approval of the report. If the committee approves, it will be available to the public shortly afterward at [this website](#).