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**RCC Statement on the Biden Administration Energy Permitting Priorities**

The Biden Harris administration's recent fact sheet on their priorities for building America's energy infrastructure comes at a critical crossroads for the renewable energy buildout. Following the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act last August, which made landmark investments in electrification, renewable energy, and environmental justice endeavors, the federal government has the opportunity to again support a game-changing investment in renewable energy infrastructure.

The Rachel Carson Council, which has long advocated for an urgent transition to a renewable energy economy, supports the administration's commitment to accelerating the deployment of critical electric transmission, modernizing data collection tools for permitting, improving community engagement, and addressing gaps in the permitting workforce. These investments will expedite the environmental review process required by the National Environmental Policy Act without undercutting the environmental and public health protections laid out in the landmark environmental law.

The framework also includes some priorities that, in the hands of a different administration, could be extremely dangerous. A directive to expand the use of categorical exclusions, even for clean energy projects, could facilitate the buildout of infrastructure that harms critical habitat or human health, especially in marginalized communities. Categorical exclusions are used to exempt a project from detailed environmental analysis, allowing it to be "categorically excluded" when the agency finds that a project will not have a significant effect on the human environment.

The administration's framework includes guidelines that provide the opportunity to bring the United States into a fossil free future, but we cannot legislate changes that future administrations could take advantage of to push through dangerous oil and gas infrastructure. Recent proposals like Senator Carper's Promoting Efficient and Engaged Reviews (PEER) Act, which would improve the permitting process without undermining critical environmental protections, provide an effective path forward for deploying renewable energy and confronting the climate crisis.

