
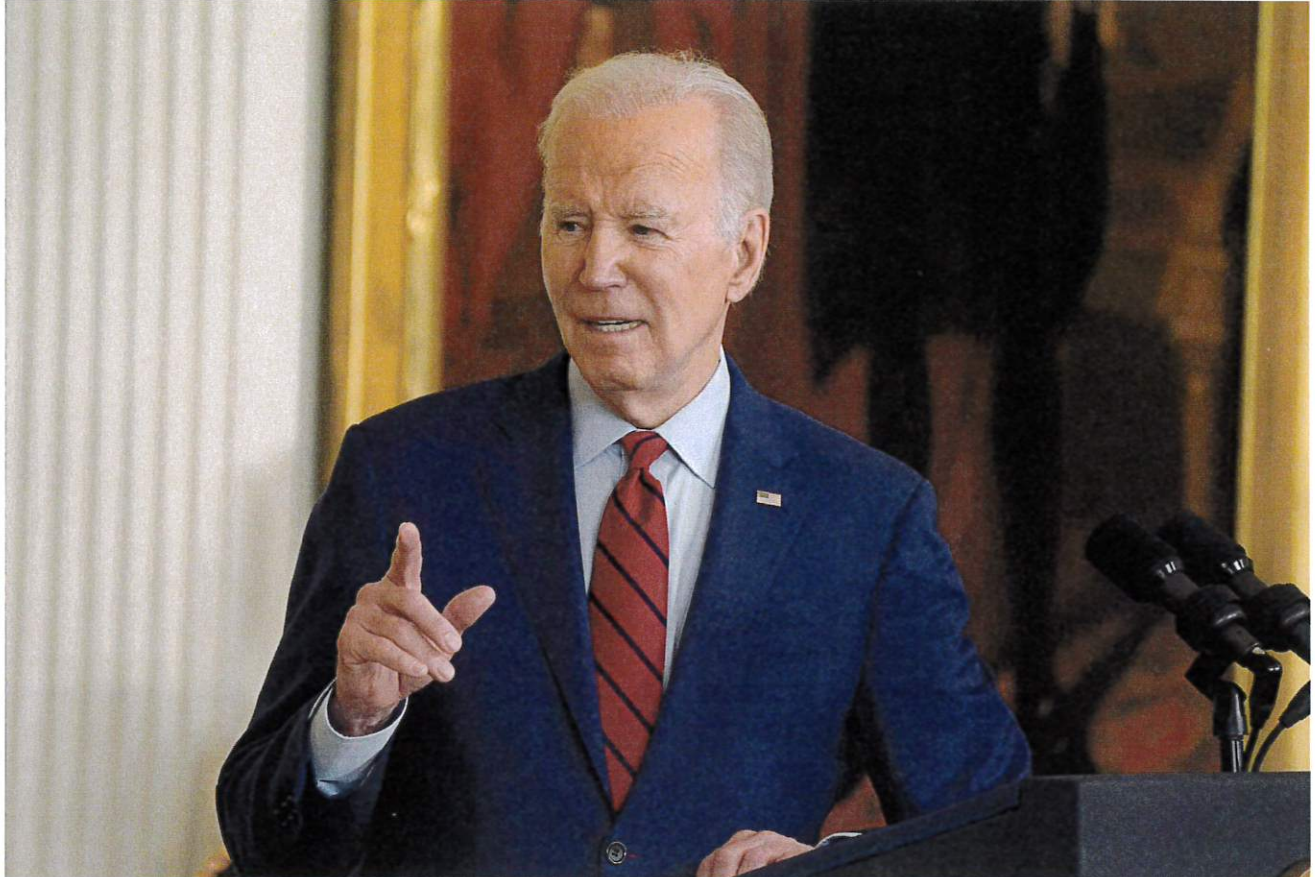


New Biden equity push builds on efforts that spawned 300 woke programs

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By Caitlin Doornbos

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WASHINGTON – More than 90 federal agencies submitted “equity action plans” last year — something that will now be required annually across the US government under a new executive order from President Biden.

Biden’s Feb. 16 order — which forced every federal agency to report on “equity” in their organizations each year — followed moves from his early days in office that have led to hundreds of woke initiatives in the executive branch.

Soon after his inauguration on Jan. 20, 2021, Biden ordered the creation of “agency equity teams” to produce reports suggesting a “comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all.”

Last year, 92 federal agencies submitted such reports. But despite Biden’s rhetoric of “equity for all,” many of the plans centered exclusively on racial minorities — from prioritizing persons of color when doling out grants and government contracts to focusing outreach efforts specifically on non-white groups.

The Department of Transportation even codified this narrative in February 2021, adding “racial equity and barriers to opportunity as a consideration for awarding discretionary grants,” according to its report.



Critics call such policies unfair, arguing that introducing race as a factor in deciding who gets what in federal dollars illegally disenfranchises people based on the color of their skin.



Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said equity programs “erode the American commitment to the dignity of hard work.”

Mark Peterson/Redux for NY Post

“‘Equity’ policies are routinely used to justify making decisions based on race, gender, and other identity characteristics,” said Russ Vought, who served as director of the Office of Management and Budget under former President Donald Trump. “This administration has turned government-funded racism into an art.”

Behind the benign-sounding language are very real consequences for taxpayer money — such as a \$3.8 billion Department of Agriculture debt-relief program that paid up to 120% of loans to farmers or ranchers of color, regardless of their financial status.

That initiative was halted after a series of lawsuits filed by white farmers and later repealed by Congress — only to be replaced by a \$3.1 billion initiative tucked in last year's Inflation Reduction Act to bail out farmers deemed "economically distressed" — who are more likely to be minorities or white women.

Speaking Friday at the Conservative Political Action Conference, former Trump administration Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said such programs "erode the American commitment to the dignity of hard work."

"The fairness of playing by the rules is abrogated when government steps in and awards bonuses to people based on something other than the fact that they worked hard and were decent and good," Pompeo said. "And more importantly, it erodes the fundamental decency — the goodness of doing what is right every day."

"Woke" waste

It's not just cabinet-level agencies such as the departments of Defense, Homeland Security, Education and Transportation that are required to complete such reports under Biden's latest order.

All other federal entities — from the CIA and NASA to smaller, lesser-known agencies such as the Denali Commission that supports Alaska — must turn one in.

Other agencies that have filed plans included the Smithsonian Institution, Americorps, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the Federal Maritime Commission, and the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission.

Some agencies went further than simply analyzing their practices in their equity plans; several created entire departments, new senior-level positions and programs dedicated solely to implementing racial equity policies.

The Treasury, for example, created a new "counselor for racial equity" position in October 2021 to "advance equity and advise the Treasury Department on all racial equity policy issues and programs," according to its report.



The Department of Defense schools' Diversity, Equity and Inclusion division was started by Kelisa Wing.
DODEA

The job and its \$161,813 annual salary went to Janis Bowdler, then-president of the JPMorgan Chase & Co. Foundation, according to FederalPay.org.

The Social Security Administration also focused much of its plan on racial equity, promising to prioritize assisting minorities.

“We will increase collection of race and ethnicity data to determine whether our programs are equitably serving our applicants and beneficiaries ... ensure equitable access to unrepresented claimants in the disability application process ... and increase access to our research grant programs for historically black colleges and universities and minority-serving institutions,” the SSA wrote in its report.

Even agencies already dedicated to addressing inequity – such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, US Interagency Council of Homelessness and the National Council on Disability – must follow the new order.

The summary of the EEOC's 2022 report states that its equity plan “focuses on systemic discrimination, advancing equity in the agency's activities and improving outreach and access to underserved communities.”

But Vought said such “equity” policies can actually have the reverse effect, introducing racism by forcing agencies to ignore non-minorities with taxpayer dollars.

“This is dangerous and exactly the type of woke and weaponized government we are trying to defund,” said Vought, whose Center for Renewing America think tank works to advance conservative priorities.

That’s because “equity” differs from “equality,” which considers all people as deserving an equal chance at success — if not equal outcomes. Equity, which Pompeo dubbed a “poisonous lie” Friday, instead attempts to level the playing field by providing certain “disadvantaged” groups with opportunities that exclude everyone else.

“We are equal in the eyes of the Lord, the antidote to the poisonous lie of equity wokeness and identity politics,” Pompeo said. “We [Conservatives] should not be ashamed, embarrassed, troubled – we should be proud of the fact that we stand for this central idea.”

Who deserves “equity?”

Those eligible for “equity,” according to Biden, include religious minorities, women and girls, “LGBTQI+ persons,” those “who live in rural areas” and US territories such as Guam and Puerto Rico, as well as anyone else “otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.”

However, many of the 300 current initiatives focus on race, with several directing taxpayer dollars to promote art projects, decorations, memorial plates and signs dedicated to promoting diversity.

One such initiative made headlines last year, when the Pentagon spent \$21 million to rechristen nine military bases originally named after Confederate generals.

In another case, the National Capital Planning Commission’s report lamented a “lack of equitable representation in memorials” in Washington, DC.



Those eligible for “equity” include religious minorities, women and girls, LGBTQI+ persons.
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The first item on its action plan was launching “a pilot project to broaden subject matter representation and elevate underrepresented stories through a series of temporary commemorative works.”

“As of 2019, 63% of Washington’s memorials emphasize themes related to military, statesmanship, or the nation’s founding, which prominently feature white men,” the commission wrote.

Several of the 2022 agency action plans committed to prioritizing racial and ethnic minorities in their procurement processes.

The GSA, for example, made a “goal to increase overall contract dollars awarded to underserved and disadvantaged communities.”

The Department of Homeland Security hyperfocused much of its equity efforts on racial minorities rather than the full expanse of Biden-defined “underserved communities.”

The report focused heavily on ways to counter “domestic violent extremism” aimed at racial and ethnic groups, which its authors claimed is “has become one of the most lethal threats to the homeland.”

“Among DVEs, racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists, including white supremacists, will likely remain the most lethal DVE movement in the homeland,” the DHS report said. “DVE threatens not only life and property, but also the ability of persons in the United States to safely exercise their civil rights and civil liberties, especially for religious, ethnic, and racial minority communities.”

Others, such as the Office of the US Trade Representative, noted it had already been prioritizing minority applicants when issuing contracts.

While US law forbids the use of race in hiring practices, “race may be used when the government has a compelling interest supporting its use,” according to Title 6 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

“Compelling interest” is a loosely defined judicial term used to describe what the government must have in mind if intends to use race as a factor in its policy or decision making. In these cases, the compelling interest is generally “promoting diversity,” the same value that currently allows colleges and universities to apply affirmative action.

Republican pushback

The White House push has been challenged by conservatives when it comes to the Pentagon, with many questioning why the world’s most powerful military has been focusing on race while China is on pace to triple its nuclear arsenal by 2030.

In November, an 18-page GOP report criticized the Defense Department’s hyperfocus on so-called “equity” and argued that “wokeness” had weakened the military.

In its most recent budget request, the DOD asked for “\$86.5 million for dedicated diversity and inclusion activities.”

Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), who co-authored the GOP report with Rep. Chip Roy (R-Texas), said at the time the Biden administration believes “advancing their woke ideology is more important than keeping our soldiers safe.”

“Our military’s singular purpose is to ‘provide for the common defense’ of our nation. It cannot be turned into a left-wing social experiment,” the report read. “... It cannot be paralyzed by fear of offending the sensibilities of Ivy League faculty lounges or progressive pundits.”



Sen. Marco Rubio claimed that the Biden administration believes “advancing their woke ideology is more important than keeping our soldiers safe.”

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The Rubio-Roy report was particularly critical of Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin’s decision to order a daylong “stand-down” in February 2021 to address “extremism” in the ranks.

Months later, the DOD’s Countering Extremist Activity Working Group that studied the topic found just 100 instances of extremist activity out of the total force of 2.1 million.

“Foreign adversaries like China and Russia loved the stand-down,” Rubio and Roy alleged. “Their view was simple: the stand-down sowed further divisions in the United States and allowed them to tell their people that America’s government is a failure.”



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The White House’s 2022 National Security Strategy listed “promoting diversity” in the military as a top

priority “to drive innovative solutions across the enterprise.”

“In discussing how to ‘strengthen the effectiveness of the force,’ the first topic listed by the Biden Administration is ‘promoting diversity and inclusion,’” the GOP report said. “That ranks above preventing suicide, reducing sexual assault and other forms of violence against and amongst our service members.”

A similar focus is seen in the Pentagon’s 2022 equity plan, which boasts that it is implementing a policy to help transgender troops join the military “in their self-identified gender” and provides a way for such troops to get “gender-affirming medical treatment and recognition of their self-identified gender.”

Pompeo said Friday the DOD’s emphasis on transgender issues is more political than practical, saying he has seen “America’s most senior military leaders obsessed with pronouns and less obsessed with the only noun that matters to a soldier: Victory.”

The Pentagon’s 2022 plan expands equity programs not only to troops, but to their children who attend Defense Department schools.

Since Biden’s first executive order, DOD “organized a division that focuses solely on advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion” for the 900,000 military-connected students who attend its 160 schools in 11 foreign countries, seven states and two territories.

“This division will examine, identify, and eliminate inequities, barriers, and gaps in DEI in all aspects, including recruitment, teaching and learning, and creating a staff and student climate that is growth-producing,” the equity plan said. “Additionally, they are embedding culturally responsive teaching strategies in the professional learning for educators to meet the individual needs of all students.”



Sen. Tommy Tuberville claims the encroachment of wokeness was the reason he successfully ran for office in 2020.

Michael Brochstein/SOPA Images/Shutterstock

The DOD schools' DEI division was started by Kelisa Wing, the self-described “woke” Diversity, Equity and Inclusion chief who drew criticism in September when several of her past racially charged tweets made headlines.

“I’m so exhausted at these white folx in these [professional development] sessions this lady actually had the CAUdacity to say black people can be racist too,” Wing tweeted July 23, 2020, using a portmanteau of “caucasian” and “audacity.”

However, GOP lawmakers have been challenging the equity programs. The outcry over Wing’s comments prompted the DOD to launch an investigation.

While its results remain unclear, a House Armed Services subcommittee continues its pursuit, asking Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin last month whether the DOD has taken any action against Wing.

What do you think? Post a comment.

Sen. Tommy Tuberville (R-Ala.), a former educator and college football coach, told The Post Thursday at CPAC that the encroachment of wokeness was the reason he successfully ran for office in 2020.

“I want [students] to have what we’ve had the opportunity to have, but today they’re being indoctrinated in education with all this woke [policy] – transgender athletes, CRT [Critical Race Theory,] the 1619 [Project,]” he said. “We don’t teach reading, writing and arithmetic anymore.”

“If we don’t change it, we’re not going to change this country back to what all of us in here grew up and had an opportunity to grow up in.”