CARBON BIGFOOT

2009 Inauguration Expected To Generate More Than A HALF-BILLION POUNDS of CO_2

An Analysis By The Institute For Liberty | January 2009

INSTITUTE FOR LIBERTY
Defending America's Right To Be Free

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In a few short days, millions will be flocking to the nation's capitol to celebrate a truly historic moment in U.S. history—the inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States.

Among his many campaign pledges, the President-elect has made energy and environment policy a cornerstone of his campaign, promising American votes a "new chapter" in climate leadership while also calling on Americans to do their voluntary part benefit the environment. But the four-day festivities surrounding his upcoming Inauguration will produce enough carbon dioxide to make most environmentalists turn a sickly shade of green.

The Institute For Liberty (IFL) utilizes data from federal agencies, environmentalist organizations, and news accounts to extrapolate the estimated environmental impact for the 2009 Inauguration. IFL estimates that, given the millions of people expected to converge on the nation's capital:

The 600 private jets expected to fly visitors to and from the event will produce 25,320,000 POUNDS of CO2

Personal vehicles could account for 262,483,200 POUNDS of CO2

In the parade, horses alone will produce more than 400 POUNDS of CO2

The total carbon footprint for the Inauguration will likely exceed 575 million POUNDS of CO2

It would take the average U.S. household 57,598 years to produce a carbon footprint equal to that of the new president's housewarming party

The IFL makes no criticism of these activities and welcomes the potential and much needed economic stimulus that the Inauguration will provide.. In the same vein, Americans and U.S. businesses should have the liberty to pursue the daily activities they need to thrive and prosper.. Moreover, they should not have to be lectured – or regulated or taxed – by officials who appear, at best, to conveniently forget their own rhetoric when celebrating their success.

Energy use and economic growth go hand in hand and any radical environmental policies to regulate greenhouse gases will likely dampen any efforts to jumpstart the U.S. economy.

Instead of pursuing punitive policies that will hamper economic output and make energy more expensive for U.S. consumers and small businesses, President-elect Obama should swiftly undertake steps that improve America's energy security and increase economic vitality.

THE INAUGURATION'S CARBON FOOTPRINT

The 2009 presidential Inauguration events will cover four days. There will be at least two dozen inaugural balls. Officials have provided wide-ranging estimates of Inauguration-day attendance, but the most widely publicized guesses have provided figures ranging from 2 million to 4 million people on Inauguration Day. Based on national averages, those totals suggest that around 750,000 personal vehicles will transport visitors to D.C. An estimated 400,000 people will arrive by commercial air, while 600 private jet flights are scheduled to arrive for the event. Hotel occupancy in the D.C. metro area will be stretched to maximum capacity.

There will be 242 horses in the parade and an estimated 5,000 portable restrooms for event-goers. Metro trains will be packed and can carry 1.2 million people to the event, while Metro buses can carry thousands more around town. Cabs are expected to increase business (and carbon output) dramatically.

Throw in food specially flown in for the event, extended hours for restaurants and bars, and myriad trinkets and t-shirts for tourists and the 2009 Inauguration could produce the biggest carbon footprint of any special event in recent history.

ABOUT THE IFL ESTIMATE

This estimate is not intended as a scientific assessment of the output of carbon dioxide or equivalents during the week of the 2009 presidential Inauguration. We have relied on EPA data, supplemental data, and news accounts to produce a conservative estimate. We are forced to rely on attendance estimates, averages for vehicles, and a series of simple calculations.

We do not estimate the carbon footprint of additional food, extended hours at D.C. bars, or specialty products and services created specially for the Inauguration. This should serve to correct for any overestimates in our assumptions and is actually likely to underestimate the full environmental impact of the event.

Further, we compared our figure to the estimated carbon footprint of the most recent U.N. gathering on climate change held in Poznan, Poland. There officials at the December 1-12 conference of approximately 10,000 people estimated the CO2 and equivalent output at 13,000 tons. Adjusting for the size of the events, our estimate is just a fraction of the prorated estimate assigned to the Poznan conference.

Taking these considerations into account, we are confident that our estimate is both conservative and fair.

INAUGURATION CARBON EMISSIONS DATA

ACTIVITY	UNITS	HOURS/ DISTANCE	CARBON GENERATED	ADDITIONAL CALCULATIONS	TOTAL CO2 EMITTED (LBS)
Personal Vehicles (To and From DC)	750,000 vehicles	400 miles roundtrip	19.6 lbs/gallon	0.04464 gallons/mile	262,483,200
Commercial Air (To and From DC)	400,000 passengers	Chicago to DC roundtrip	539 lbs/person		215,600,000
Tour Buses (To and From DC)	550,000 passengers	500 miles roundtrip	0.2 lbs/mile		55,000,000
Private Air (To and From DC)	600 planes	5 hours roundtrip	21.1 lbs/gallon	400 gallons/ hour	25,320,000
Trains (To and From DC)	125,000 passengers	100 miles roundtrip	0.7 lbs/mile		8,750,000
Subway Trains (Around DC)	1,200,000 riders	4 miles	0.6 lbs/mile		2,880,000
Taxis (Around DC)	5,800 taxis	150 miles per day	19.6 lbs/gallon	0.04464 gallons/mile	761,201
Metro Buses (Around DC)	23,460 passengers	4 miles	0.2 lbs/mile		18,768
Hotels	95,000 hotel rooms	2 nights	27.2 lbs per night		5,168,000
Horses	242 mounted police		1.7 lbs per day		418

TOTAL CO2 EMITTED 575,981,587.3

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

While the Obama administration is free to celebrate as it sees fit, the extraordinarily high environmental impact of its Inauguration produces a troubling juxtaposition with policies then-Senator and presidential candidate Obama supported. He

The Cap-and-Trade Carbon Scheme

The Obama/Biden campaign has said it wishes to impose a cap-and-trade scheme to regulate carbon dioxide and reduce emissions by an astonishing 80 percent by 2050. Unlike a direct tax on carbon, which would be transparent and allow for U.S. businesses and citizens to plan their budgets accordingly, a cap-and-trade scheme is not transparent. It would create a giant slush fund for government bureaucrats while doing little or nothing to improve the environment.

EPA ATTEMPTS TO REGULATE CARBON DIOXIDE AS A "POLLUTANT"

The U.S. regulatory structure already costs the American economy more than $1 trillion per year. For the average small business (of 20 employees or fewer), this translates to $7,700 per employee per year. An announced rulemaking effort by the EPA would add millions of more hours of paperwork to this burden as the department seeks to regulate carbon dioxide as a pollutant.

If politicians mandate that U.S. businesses radically limit their emissions, the fallout could be widespread: construction could screech to a grinding halt, trial lawyers could file millions of greenhouse gas-related civil suits, and many industry may be forced to permanently scale down their presence in America, sending countless jobs and capital overseas. Still developing nations such as China maintain much less stringent environmental standards than the United States, and businesses and populations living in these places will continue to emit at increasingly higher rates as their economies grow. The leakage of these emissions will effectively ensure that global greenhouse gas concentrations will not improve. Regulation of carbon emissions under the Clean Air Act could therefore result in economic chaos with little, if any, actual benefit to the environment.

BETTER SOLUTIONS

Instead of increasing the cost of energy by regulating or taxing Americans, political leaders should heed the saying, "Drill, baby, drill." Expanding access to America's domestic resources will increase energy security and provide a means of keeping the price of foreign energy sources down. This will unleash U.S. economic growth instead of further stunting output and investment by imposing punitive and unproductive policies.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR LIBERTY

Founded in 2005, The Institute for Liberty initially focused its mission on technology policy and national security issues. Its philosophy is one of keeping the government focused on the primary mission of making sure our nation is safe, while keeping it from unnecessarily interfering in the daily lives of America's entrepreneurs.

METHODS AND CALCULATIONS

HORSES

We use the reported number of horses from Sun, Lena H. and Stewart, Nikita. "No. 1 Priority: Porta-Potties on the Mall." Washington Post. December 19, 2008. Average horse emissions were obtained by using: "EPA Data on Agriculture Carbon Emissions" http://yosemite.epa.gov/OAR/globalwarming.nsf/UniqueKeyLookup/RAMR69V4ZU/$File/05agriculture.pdf.

PERSONAL VEHICLE TRAVEL (TO AND FROM DC)

We estimate the number of vehicles by taking the number of people estimated arriving by car in Shalash, Samieh. "Driving to the inauguration? Expect delays

I-64 traffic between Williamsburg and Richmond will be heavy Jan. 19-21, Virginia State Police say." The Daily Press, December 31, 2008. We use a fraction of that number, assuming significant carpooling. We arrive at the CO2 generation figure using: U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). Voluntary Reporting of Greenhouse Gases Program, Emission Coefficients, http://www.eia.doe.gov/oiaf/1605/coefficients.html. We further make a conservative estimate of just 400 miles per round trip. We get average gallons per mile from: Bureau of Transportation Statistics. "Average Fuel Efficiency of U.S. Passenger Cars and Light Trucks."

COMMERCIAL AIR TRAVEL

We assume the average trip is from Chicago, IL (the main city in the President-elect's home state) to Washington, D.C. According to Terrapass, a direct flight would produce 539 lbs CO2 per person (http://www.terrapass.com/carbon-footprint-calculator/#air). We multiply by the 400,000 expected commercial air passengers as estimated in: Sheridan, Mary Beth. "Inauguration Day Crowd Estimate Reduced by Half" The Washington Post, December 22, 2008. Our conservative assumptions of average distance and non-stop flights will serve to underestimate the likely sum.

TOUR BUSES (TO AND FROM DC)

Estimate of Tour bus passengers is from Zongker, Brett. "Mayor: DC preparing for huge inauguration crowds" Associated Press, December 19, 2008. We multiply by the passenger capacity of tour buses, which is about 55.We estimate a round-trip total of 500 miles. We use the Wired Magazine calculator for CO2 output: http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/14.05/carbon.html.

PRIVATE AIR TRAVEL

We assume 5 hours per roundtrip, which at two and a half hours each way is similar to a direct flight from Chicago, IL. We use the estimate of 600 planes from the National Business Aviation Association. "2009 Presidential Inauguration Bulletin." http://www.nbaa.org/ops/airspace/regional/northeast/2009-inauguration.php#tmi Accessed: January 9, 2009. We chose a conservative estimate of 5 hours round-trip. We use 400 gallons per hour, which is the burn rate of the Gulfstream 550. http://www.jets.com/Jets_ResearchJetsListing.aspx?AircraftName=Gulfstream%20GV-SP%20(G550) We arrive at the CO2 generation figure using: U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). Voluntary Reporting of Greenhouse Gases Program, Emission Coefficients, http://www.eia.doe.gov/oiaf/1605/coefficients.html.

TRAINS (TO AND FROM DC)

We assume an average roundtrip of 100 miles. To attain the number of people using trains, we use: Sheridan, Mary Beth. "Inauguration Day Crowd Estimate Reduced by Half" The Washington Post, December 22, 2008. We use the Wired Magazine calculator for CO2 output: http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/14.05/carbon.html.

METRO (SUBWAY) TRAINS

We attain the number of Metro riders using: Sheridan, Mary Beth. "Inauguration Day Crowd Estimate Reduced by Half" The Washington Post, December 22, 2008. We use the Wired Magazine calculator for CO2 output: http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/14.05/carbon.html.

TAXIS

We use an estimate for the number of taxis using: Sheridan, Mary Beth. "Inauguration Day Crowd Estimate Reduced by Half" The Washington Post, December 22, 2008. We assume that each will travel 150 miles more for Inauguration activities than they would otherwise. We arrive at the CO2 generation figure using: U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). Voluntary Reporting of Greenhouse Gases Program, Emission Coefficients, http://www.eia.doe.gov/oiaf/1605/coefficients.html. We make a conservative estimate of 400 miles per round trip. We get average gallons per mile from: Bureau of Transportation Statistics. "Average Fuel Efficiency of U.S. Passenger Cars and Light Trucks."

METRO BUSES

We make a conservative estimate of passengers using: Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority. "Metro Announces Special Inauguration Metrobus Service" January 8, 2009. We multiply by 30 passengers per bus at an estimated 2 loops per hour and four miles per loop and traveling the 17 hours announced by Metro.

HOTELS

We attain hotel capacity from: Stewart, Nikita; Ruane, Michael. "Can Mall Be Filled For an Inauguration?" The Washington Post, November 18, 2008. We assume two nights. We use estimates from Conservation International on average CO2 output per night in a hotel (translated from tons to pounds): http://www.conservation.org/act/live_green/carboncalc/Pages/methodology.aspx

AVERAGE FAMILY CO2

We rely on the average-family CO2 footprint of 5 tons per year, as provided by Conservation International. http://www.conservation.org/act/live_green/carboncalc/Pages/methodology.aspx

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