

# KAMALA HARRIS ON STATE & LOCAL

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Following a historic virtual nominating process, Vice President Kamala Harris is the Democratic presidential nominee, having secured the necessary pledged delegates ahead of the Democratic National Convention in August.

On August 6<sup>th</sup>, the Harris campaign announced Minnesota Governor Tim Walz (D) as her running mate. Walz beat out several other candidates, including Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro (D). Notably, this is the first time in 100 years that Democrats have nominated a sitting governor to be vice president.

A former history teacher, Walz was first elected to the U.S. House in 2006, won re-election five times, and became governor in 2019. In Washington, Walz focused on veterans' issues such as mental health, suicide, and pain management. Under Walz's tenure as governor, Minnesota enacted investments in affordable housing, a tax credit aimed at low-income parents and established the goal of a carbon-free electrical grid by 2040. This past legislative session, Walz championed and signed into law a host of progressive policies, including universal free school meals for students, a proposal adding abortion rights protections into law, and restoring voting rights for the formerly incarcerated.

This document offers an overview of what is known about Vice President Harris' positions on state and local issues based on her work as California Attorney General, Senator, and Vice President and offers insight into what policy objectives a Harris-Walz administration might pursue.

## TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Vice President Harris has long advocated for investing in transportation and infrastructure projects that create jobs, reduce carbon emissions, and improve mobility and access for all Americans. She will point to her track record as California attorney general, where she pursued the inclusion of environmental justice and social equity considerations in transportation planning and decision-making, and supported community-led efforts to revitalize and reconnect areas affected by infrastructure development. As Senator, she co-sponsored legislation to establish a pilot program to study the feasibility and impacts of removing or retrofitting existing transportation infrastructure that creates barriers for communities.

### The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), provided \$1.2 trillion to repair and upgrade the nation's infrastructure. To date, the Biden-Harris administration has announced more than \$500 billion in infrastructure investments since

the passage of the IJA and other legislation (IRA and CHIPS). California, Texas, New York, Florida, and Pennsylvania lead the pack (see [White House Fact Sheets](#)). A Harris administration would play an influential role in the IJA's continued rollout with more than half of the funding yet to be deployed. The largest portion of IJA money is designated for road and bridge construction followed by rail, broadband, power and water projects. Key considerations for Harris and the IJA include:

- **Human Rights Lens:** Harris will maintain her perspective on public transportation as a human rights issue, advocating for infrastructure spending that benefits all Americans. She once [tweeted that “infrastructure spending isn’t a transportation issue for most Americans – it’s a human rights issue.”](#) This aligns with the Biden-Harris administration’s [Justice 40 Initiative](#), which sets a goal that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain Federal climate, clean energy, affordable and sustainable housing, and other investments flow to disadvantages communities that are marginalized by underinvestment and overburdened by pollution.
- **The Environment:** It is expected that Harris will continue to support funding for electric vehicle charging stations, expanding public transit options, and modernizing water infrastructure. Even after Harris’ first presidential campaign was suspended, she has continued to advocate for incentivizing reducing car usage and enhancing public transit networks, a position she held during her time as California’s attorney general.
- **Effective Implementation:** A Harris administration will seek to ensure the effective implementation of IJA, addressing concerns by critics about potential inefficiencies reducing the overall impact of the investments.

The Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Program is one that Vice President Harris is expected to champion. The program aims to reconnect communities that have been divided or displaced by transportation infrastructure projects, such as highways, railroads, and bridges, that have disrupted neighborhoods, harmed the environment, and exacerbated racial and economic inequality. In the first round of funding for the Reconnecting Communities Program, 39 Planning Grants and 6 Capital Construction grants were awarded, including but not limited to projects in Buffalo, New York, City of Long Beach, California, Birmingham, Alabama, and Baltimore, Maryland – all places where physical barriers isolated or divided residents.

### **CHIPS and Science Act**

The CHIPS and Science Act, signed into law by President Biden on August 9, 2022, is a landmark piece of legislation aimed at boosting domestic semiconductor manufacturing and research. The law authorizes roughly \$280 billion in new funding to boost domestic research and manufacturing of semiconductors in the United States. Since the CHIPS Act was introduced, companies in the semiconductor ecosystem have announced dozens of new projects across the United States totaling nearly \$450 billion in private investments. To date, the CHIPS Program Office has announced more than \$30 billion in grant awards and over \$25 billion in loans to 15 companies across 25 projects in 15 states.

We expect Harris’ policies related to the CHIPS Act to likely focus on:

- **Equity and Inclusion:** Ensuring that investments in semiconductor manufacturing benefit underserved communities and promote diversity in the workforce.
- **Innovation and Competitiveness:** Continuing to enhance American competitiveness in semiconductor technology and research.
- **Workforce Development:** Expanding educational and training programs to prepare more Americans for jobs in the semiconductor industry.
- **National Security:** Strengthening national security by reducing reliance on foreign semiconductor supply chains.

## ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

Vice President Harris is widely seen as having a progressive track record on the environment and can be expected to carry that with her into the Oval Office. Analysts cite her record of prosecuting oil and gas companies as attorney general of California and her support for the Green New Deal as a United States Senator. She has supported proposals to create a national climate bank and to promote environmental justice, the latter being a key consideration for a Harris policy agenda. A Harris administration can be expected to double down on the Biden administration’s climate change agenda to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which will break down along party lines in the states. Republican Attorneys General, for example, led the fight in challenging the Obama-era Clean Power Plan. Addressing pollution in various forms would also be a priority for a Harris administration. In the Senate, Harris co-sponsored the Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act of 2020 and as Vice President has supported initiatives to eliminate single-use plastics from federal operations.

### The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) is the hallmark, environmental legislative achievement for the Biden-Harris administration. The IRA includes more than \$369 billion to accelerate the transition to net zero in the U.S., as well as a package of tax credits and incentives to help companies tackle climate change, increase investments in renewable energy and improve energy efficiency. In response to the IRA, state and local governments have launched coordinating bodies with the goal of winning federal grants and efficiently deploying funding.

Vice President Harris has been a strong advocate for the IRA – in fact, she cast the tie-breaking vote in the Senate – emphasizing its benefits for states and communities across the country. In what Harris has touted as historic investments into the “clean energy economy”, she has focused on key components of the law, including:

- **Job Creation:** The IRA will create good-paying, union jobs in sectors like wind, solar, and electric vehicle manufacturing in states.
- **Energy Costs:** The IRA aims to lower energy bills for families by promoting energy efficiency and clean energy projects.

- **State-Specific Benefits:** The White House [state fact sheets](#) detail how the IRA will benefit each state, including savings on utility bills, tax credits for electric vehicles, and economic opportunities from clean energy projects.

The next administration will play a significant role in the implementation of the IRA, which a Harris administration and be expected to aggressively pursue. By some estimates, less than 20 percent of the \$1.1 trillion in congressionally appropriated energy, climate, technology, and infrastructure investments have been spent to date. A central plank of the law comes from its estimated \$527 billion in tax incentives for low-carbon technologies, such as electric vehicles, solar and wind power, hydrogen fuel and efforts to capture carbon pollution. The U.S. Department of the Treasury continues to work towards promulgating many of these tax breaks, including ones around clean hydrogen. Funding also remains in authorized loan programs.

## TECHNOLOGY

Hailing from California, Vice President Harris has a long history with tech companies and issues. As attorney general of California, one of her priority issues was curtailing the distribution of pornography on social media. Harris also pursued several innovations in her office, including [launching](#) a web-based tool that allows California law enforcement agencies to digitally report law enforcement or civilian use of force.

From antitrust to privacy to artificial intelligence to protecting minors online, a host of tech issues will remain at the forefront in the next administration and in states across the country. States are taking the lead on many of these issues, including passing comprehensive data privacy laws and bills regulating everything from digital platforms to artificial intelligence.

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** As Vice President, Harris has been intimately involved in the administration's policy formation related to AI. She convened and sought input from tech leaders before President Biden issued his AI Executive Order, which focuses principally on safeguarding the government's use of the technology and setting standards that could foster commercial adoption. As president, expect Harris to focus on the responsible use and development of AI systems. Equity and preventing bias will be top concerns.
- **Cybersecurity:** As former Attorney General of California, Harris oversaw numerous initiatives to combat cybercrime and improve cyber resilience. In the U.S. Senate, she supported legislation aimed at enhancing cybersecurity infrastructure and protecting sensitive information.
- **STEM Education and Workforce Development:** Harris has advocated for increased investment in STEM education and workforce development programs. During the 2020 presidential campaign, she proposed a [policy](#) to dedicate \$60 billion to STEM programs and infrastructure at HBCUs.
- **Data Privacy:** Harris has strongly advocated for data privacy throughout her career. As California attorney general, she [created](#) the Privacy Enforcement and Protection Unit within the California Department of Justice. She could push for stricter regulations on how

tech companies collect, use, and share user data. States have been aggressively legislating in this arena with many more set to explore – and potentially pass – comprehensive data privacy bills in 2025.

- **Consumer Protection and Online Safety:** A Harris administration could wade more forcefully into the ongoing federal-state-local debate around online safety. As Vice President, Harris already [launched](#) a task force on online harassment and abuse.
- **Digital Equity & Broadband:** As recent as June 26, 2024, Harris stressed that the Harris-Biden administration would keep working to facilitate access to affordable, high-speed internet after Congress made the largest investment in history with \$90 billion to address barriers to internet access. With the recent release of a landmark Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program, we can expect to see a Harris-Walz administration continue to prioritize providing states with funding to expand meaningful broadband connectivity to all communities.

## EDUCATION

As with other policy areas, Harris will play a significant role in determining her administration’s education agenda. Conventional wisdom suggests a policy carryover from the current administration and a focus on student loan debt forgiveness and expanding protections for LGBTQ+ students and school staff through a rewrite of Title IX rules, among other policy areas. All these issues have drawn significant attention and partisan debate in the states. Republican attorneys general, for example, have filed lawsuits challenging the Biden Harris administration's actions around [student loan forgiveness](#) and [Title IX](#).

The American Federation of Teachers was the first union to endorse Vice President Harris and the National Education Association (NEA) quickly expressed enthusiastic support for the addition of “...a high school teacher and NEA member” to the ticket. The selection of Minnesota Governor Tim Walz (D), a former educator, could prioritize education on the policy agenda. As Governor, Walz has been active in education issues, noting several policy wins. In 2023, Walz signed into law a measure making Minnesota the fourth state to provide permanent access to universal school meals. He has also driven a substantial increase in funding for K-12 education and promoted access to unemployment insurance for hourly school workers. With the help of a supportive legislature, Walz tackled so-called culture war issues head on. He made Minnesota a “trans refuge” state for people fleeing restrictive laws, banned book bans, and expanded ethnic studies and Indigenous history.

### **Higher Education**

On the higher education front, a Harris administration is also likely to promote tuition free college either broadly or more narrowly tailored to community colleges. In the Senate, Harris was one of five original co-sponsors of the College for All Act of 2017. A graduate of a Historically Black College and University (HBCU), Harris is also likely to prioritize ensuring that HBCUs have proper funding. For-Profit Colleges and Universities are also likely to stay in the regulatory spotlight. The Biden administration has pursued a host of policy and regulatory measures targeting

higher education. Similarly, as California attorney general, Harris prosecuted several for-profit higher education institutions.

### **K-12 Education**

For K-12 education, Harris' record in the Senate is instructive. She sponsored the Family Friendly Schools Act, which would have directed the Education Department to provide grants to local school districts to support aligning the school day with family work schedules. Harris also sponsored the 21<sup>st</sup> Century STEM for Girls and Underrepresented Minorities Act, which would have directed the Department of Education to provide funding for school districts to cover the costs of STEM education activities for girls and children from racial minorities. School choice will be a front-and-center issue with the proliferation of policies in states, primarily GOP-led. Another issue to watch is the ongoing debate around technology – cell phones in particular – use in school. Federal legislation has been [introduced](#) that would require the U.S. Department of Education to study the effects of students' cellphone use, and a number of states – and school districts – are [implementing measures](#) to limit cellphone use in schools.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

The Harris 2024 campaign has demonstrated that it will not shy away from her prosecutor history and that it will emphasize her background as a key differentiator from former President Donald Trump. Vice President Harris has a complex record on public safety issues, reflecting her experience as a prosecutor and legislator. As her background reflects, Harris can be expected to continue advocating for comprehensive public safety reforms. These efforts will be met differently in states, where issues around crime have become highly politicized with Republican and Democratic lawmakers pursuing divergent remediation strategies.

- As Vice President, she has supported President Biden's initiatives to address systemic issues in policing and criminal justice, and she is likely to push for further reforms at the state and local levels. Harris has consistently promoted policies aimed at reducing crime while ensuring justice and equity, such as community-based policing and increased accountability for law enforcement officers.
- Harris has a history of supporting measures to reform sentencing laws, end qualified immunity for police officers, and ban chokeholds and no-knock warrants. As a Senator, she co-sponsored the Justice in Policing Act, which includes these provisions. Her stance on these issues reflects her commitment to addressing police misconduct and enhancing public trust in law enforcement.
- Harris would continue to prioritize investments in community programs that address the root causes of crime, such as poverty, lack of education, and mental health issues. She has advocated for increased funding for mental health services, education, and job training programs, recognizing that these are critical components of a holistic approach to public safety.

- Harris has also been a strong proponent of gun control measures. As California’s attorney general, she defended the state’s ban on assault weapons and challenged the National Rifle Association in court. She has supported federal legislation to implement universal background checks, ban assault weapons, and close loopholes in existing gun laws. Harris’s approach to gun control is aimed at reducing gun violence and ensuring safer communities. At one time enjoying an “A” rating from the NRA, Gov. Walz signed a bill last year creating a red flag law and expanding background checks for gun owners in Minnesota.
- Harris has emphasized the importance of criminal justice reform, advocating for the decriminalization of marijuana and the expungement of records for those convicted of marijuana-related offenses. Harris believes that public safety can be enhanced through reforms that promote rehabilitation and reintegration rather than punishment alone.

## HEALTHCARE

If elected President, healthcare will face continuing work and attention on the health care system. Harris has [expressed support for](#) broader healthcare reforms, including a single-payer system, sometimes referred to as “Medicare for All” during the 2020 Democratic Primary. However, as a part of the Biden administration, she has championed the Affordable Care Act (ACA) as a pathway to coverage and signaled that will be her approach in a Harris administration.

One immediate focus will be on shoring up and expanding the ACA insurance markets. Subsidies designed to lower costs are set to expire at the end of 2025. Medicaid will also be a focus issue. The program’s role in state budgets is unique since the program acts as both an expenditure and the largest source of federal support in state budgets. In 2023, total Medicaid expenditures (including federal matching funds) made up 30 percent of state budgets, on average, making it the largest category of spending. Key Medicaid issues will include:

- **State Expansion:** We can expect to see Harris speaking to the 10 states who have not expanded Medicaid. These states are Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Depending on the makeup of Congress, we can also expect Harris to champion a legislative approach to approaching coverage gaps in these states.
- **Coverage Expansion:** Harris has supported a number of coverage expansions including [services in schools](#) and for [postpartum care](#) up to 12 months.
- **State Waivers:** States continue to seek Medicaid waivers to allow for experimental projects in serving Medicaid enrollees. Republican-led state waiver requests for work requirements that tie Medicaid to employment will continue to falter in a Harris administration. The outlook is uncertain on other fronts, like using Medicaid to pay for addiction treatment, connect behavioral health patients with housing and employment, and providing housing services to some enrollees.

Other healthcare issues to watch include:

- **Prescription Drugs:** Echoing Biden, Harris has expressed the desire to expand Medicare drug cost measures enacted by way of the IRA to the commercial sector where the majority of working Americans purchase their insurance. Harris will face a growing GLP-1 obesity drug market and a growing market of gene therapies for rare diseases. Expect growing debates about coverage, CMS demonstration projects, prior-approval policies, and federal risk sharing.
- **Maternal Health:** Harris would likely continue to prioritize investments in maternal health to help address rising rates of maternal mortality and morbidity in the United States. Her efforts [include](#) promoting policies that support safe pregnancies and childbirth and reducing complications and mortality in the year following birth.
- **Reproductive Rights:** We should expect Harris to be a strong vocal advocate on reproductive rights in the states. Since the Supreme Court's *Dobbs* decision, which overturned *Roe v. Wade*, states are at the forefront of debate. During a [MSNBC town hall in May 2019](#), Harris proposed going further than *Roe v. Wade*, by stating that, if elected president, she would require any state-passed law limiting reproductive freedoms to undergo approval from the Department of Justice before being enacted.
- **Private Equity:** Consolidation in the health care industry has drawn increasing attention from federal and state lawmakers and could be a priority under a Harris administration. As attorney general of California, Harris took a particular interest in this issue and California [continues to be a thought leader](#) in this space. In 2021, President Biden signed an executive order ([Executive Order on Promoting Competition in the American Economy](#)) targeting, in part, hospital and health insurance consolidations and other actions decreasing competition and raising prices. As President, Harris could, among other actions, influence the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and instruct the departments of Justice and Health and Human Services to prioritize antitrust laws.

## INNER CIRCLE

### Governors

Governors traditionally enjoy a close working relationship with the White House. Shortly after inauguration day in February 2025, most of the nation's governors will be in Washington for the National Governors Association Winter Meeting, which typically includes meetings and a dinner at the White House. As Vice President, Harris has worked closely with several governors and can be expected to continue to prioritize engagement with them as president. Gov. Walz most recently served as Chair of the Democratic Governors Association and will bring that experience and those relationships with him into the role as vice president. Governors Josh Shapiro (PA), Andy Beshear (KY), J.B. Pritzker (IL), and Roy Cooper (NC) were all on the short list for vice presidential consideration. Governor Cooper has already ramped up efforts as a campaign surrogate and is expected to be very active in swing states across the country for the campaign. The Harris campaign has already deployed governors as surrogates throughout the country in recent days. Governor Gretchen Whitmer (MI) serves as a Co-Chair of the Harris-Walz campaign and has

visited New Hampshire. Governor Andy Beshear has campaigned for Harris in Cumming, GA, an Atlanta suburb. Other influential surrogates include Governors Gavin Newsom (CA) and Wes Moore (MD).

### **Attorneys General**

Attorneys General will be a natural constituent group for a President Harris with her background as Attorney General of California. The Democratic Attorneys General Association – along with 22 individual Democratic Attorneys General – [enthusiastically endorsed](#) Harris for President.

### **Mayors**

The Biden-Harris administration has a close, working relationship with mayors, which is one that will continue in a Harris administration. In addition to mayors noted below, this relationship extends to and includes significant policy engagement with the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

- In 2003 when Harris became the district attorney in San Francisco, that same election cycle, **Gavin Newsom** was elected mayor, succeeding former Mayor Willie Brown. Newsom, now governor of California, is a close friend of Harris.
- Mayor **London Breed** (San Francisco, CA) – VP Harris home city where she has regularly engaged with Mayor London Breed on housing, homelessness, and public health initiatives.
- Mayor **Keisha Lance Bottoms** and Mayor **Andre Dickens** – Harris has regularly made trips to Atlanta, working with former Mayor Bottoms and current Mayor Dickens on topics such as voting rights, economic development, and public health.
- Current Transportation Secretary **Pete Buttigieg**, a former mayor of South Bend, IN - was on the Vice President's short list of running mates and is considered a policy advisor.
- Mayor **Steve Benjamin** – former mayor of Columbia, SC, now leading White House Office of Public Engagement for the Biden-Harris administration and is serving as a Senior Advisor to the campaign.