

Looming Arctic Oil Sale Reveals Political Risks for Biden

Media Mentions

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A 2017 tax law provision mandating two oil lease sales in the Arctic looms over President Joe Biden's 2024 election campaign, threatening to revive attacks on the administration's energy record.

The White House must hold the sales in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) by December, forcing the president to advance potential crude oil development on lands that he once promised to protect from drilling.

Bracewell Policy Resolution Group Senior Principal **Frank Maisano** surmised with *E&E News* that if the administration can push action on the ANWR oil sale until after the election on November 5 to avoid the issue flaring up, it likely will.

"[In an election year], what happens after November, it becomes irrelevant," Maisano said. "I don't think they're going to worry about it until they have to deal with it. And if they win reelection, the problem they're going to have is dealing with Congress."

The Bureau of Land Management will have to put out a notice of sale at least 30 days before the auction takes place. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 ordered the sale by December 22, 2024, meaning a notice should be released by late November.

Maisano noted that the president politically leans more conservative than some of his advisers on energy issues, which has likely restrained him from policies that would fully win the support of climate and environmental groups.

He compared Biden's long history as a politician on Capitol Hill — the president was a Democratic senator for Delaware from 1973 to 2009 — to Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chair Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), a supporter of fossil fuel development. Manchin has often played a role as the

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Democratic swing vote on Biden's energy policies to the consternation of climate and clean energy activists.

"He's on a tightrope," Maisano said of Biden. "Environmentalists don't trust him and don't like him already, because they think he's not their guy."