

Biden Administration's Infrastructure Plan Contains \$100 Billion for School Building Upgrades

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By John Boling



President Biden. Photo by Evan Vucci/AP.

Settling the long-running dispute between the parties that school construction is a state and local responsibility, the American Jobs Plan includes \$100 billion in funds for public school upgrades and construction, with \$50 billion to be provided through direct grants and \$50 billion provided through bonds.

President Joe Biden spoke of the need for updated school facilities in a press conference on March 25. "How many schools where the kids can't drink the water out of the fountain? How many schools are still in a position where there's asbestos? How many schools in America that we are sending our kids to don't have adequate ventilation?" he asked. "There's so much we can do that's good stuff, makes people healthier, and creates good jobs."

The administration said the priority for school construction funds in the American Jobs Plan is to ensure schools are "safe and healthy places of learning for our kids and work for our teachers and other education professionals, for example by improving indoor air quality and ventilation." American Jobs Plan funding would also be used for "cutting-edge, energy-efficient and electrified, resilient, and innovative school buildings with technology and labs that will help our educators prepare students to be productive workers and valued students."

The second major initiative of the administration will prove to be tougher than passing the coronavirus relief package. The administration will face dissenters within the party, a very narrow majority in both chambers of Congress, and, if Republicans don't back the plan, the need to pass the bill using an obscure parliamentary maneuver called "reconciliation." Biden and Congressional leaders have set a completion date of this summer, so keep watching this space for updates on this issue.

If passed, this one provision could directly benefit IIBEC members by allowing school districts nationwide to modify and upgrade their building enclosures, leading to a mini building boom in the sector.





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Boling joined IIBEC in early 2021. He focuses on increasing IIBEC's influence on federal, state, provincial, and local public policy, helping shape codes and standards, expanding IIBEC's influence in the building industry, and increasing the relevance and value of IIBEC's policy positions. You can reach him at jboling@iibec.org.

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