

POLITICO

The Long Game

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THE BIG IDEA

ADIOS! — Good riddance to 2021, a dumpster fire of a year that featured extreme weather, the endless pandemic, rising inequality, supply chain disasters and political violence.

This year has got to be better, right? Here are some positives to look forward to.

100

The number of electric vehicle models that will be available for sale in the U.S.

The number of electric vehicle models that will be available for sale in the U.S. in 2022, up from 62 last year, according to the Electric Power Research Institute, a nonprofit research group. Americans are warming to the idea of owning an EV, too. A [Morning Consult survey](#) found that 51 percent would consider buying an EV in the next decade, up from 39 percent at the start of 2021.

\$550 billion

The amount of infrastructure money that will start flowing into states and cities this year.

The amount of money that will start flowing into states and cities this year under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill that President Joe Biden signed into law in November. In addition to historic levels of funding available for roads, transit, rail and more, states and cities that share the administration's priorities on climate resilience, safe streets and social equity will be well-positioned to benefit.

84

The number of S&P 100 companies that disclose, or have committed to disclose, diversity data.

The number of S&P 100 companies that disclose, or have committed to disclose, workforce diversity data to the public. That's a sixfold increase from July 2020, [when New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer](#) launched a shareholder campaign for greater transparency. Companies with more than 100 employees are already required to disclose the race, ethnicity and gender of their workforce to the federal government, but that information typically isn't made public.

22 percent

The share of U.S. electricity that will be generated by renewables.

The share of U.S. electricity that will be generated by renewable sources in 2022, including wind and solar, according to [the Energy Information Administration](#). Yes, that's a long way from the White House goal of 100 percent carbon-free power by 2030. But let's call it a glass half-full. It would mark the biggest use of renewables to date. That's not to say the energy transition is linear. Globally, greenhouse gas emissions from the power sector reached an all-time high in 2021 as recovering economies relied on coal and natural gas to meet demand. Still, clean energy is expected to [account for 90 percent](#) of new capacity in the coming years.

77 percent

The share of adults optimistic about 2022.

On average, 77 percent of adults across 33 countries are optimistic that 2022 will be better than 2021, [according to a survey](#) from market research firm Ipsos Group. That's despite expectations of fast-rising prices and extreme weather. In the U.S., the outlook is slightly less positive, with about 71 percent upbeat about 2022. Only in Japan, Belgium, Turkey, France and Germany are people more pessimistic.

By contrast, 94 percent of people in China are wearing rose-tinted glasses.

CORPORATE PROMISES



Jan. 6, 2021. | John Minchillo/AP Photo

VALUES INVESTING — On Jan. 4, 2021, [executives](#) at Mastercard, Lyft, Macy's, the WNBA and other companies and business groups urged Congress to certify the results of the 2020 election.

That remarkable moment — Corporate America calling on politicians to defend democracy — was lost in the violence that followed two days later, when hundreds of people, nearly all supporters of then-President

Donald Trump, rioted at the Capitol and nearly 140 Republican lawmakers voted against certification of Biden's win.

Companies and trade groups rushed to suspend or abandon political giving. Now [a survey from the Conference Board](#), a corporate think tank, finds that government affairs shops used that time to rethink their criteria for political giving.

Companies are going beyond policy and considering whether candidates will trigger unflattering headlines, employee walkouts and other ESG pressures. A politician's thinking on trade, intellectual property or government spending still matters, but so does their stance on diversity, abortion and voting rights.

"Those weren't necessarily the considerations that you had in mind when you made contributions to those folks in the past," **Paul Washington**, executive director of the Conference Board's ESG center, said in an interview.

Respondents at 120 companies all said they recalibrated their campaign giving after Jan. 6. The survey isn't comprehensive, but it captures the mood at America's largest corporations across sectors, Washington said.

He predicts companies will draw "red lines" against racism, gender inequality and violence going forward.

But they'll have to draw those red lines to have an impact — and avoid being judged in the court of public opinion.

Nearly half of companies surveyed also said they're teaching their biggest stakeholders — employees — why political contributions are necessary and how they work.

"This isn't about getting employees to drink the Kool-Aid," Washington said. "It's about helping them understand how the

company's political activities tie to a corporate purpose and a broader societal purpose.”

Executives and other stakeholders also can't expect a company's values will fully align with those of elected officials.

“No one is going to be 100 percent match,” Washington said.

Corporations can be a moderating influence on partisanship.

They contribute to Democrats and Republicans alike and generally are more concerned about practical impact than inflammatory rhetoric.

Investors called out company giving in 2021. More than 83 percent of institutional shareholders voted in favor of more disclosure on political spending. That's up from less than 76 percent in 2020, and the number is expected to rise again this year, according to the nonprofit Center for Political Accountability, which publishes [a model code of conduct](#) for corporate disclosure.

BlackRock Inc. and Vanguard, two of the world's largest investment managers, backed the center's disclosure model last year for the first time.

