

Biden vs Trump on technology

In every presidential election since 2008, the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation (ITIF) has released a report examining the two major candidates' positions on a host of technology and innovation policy issues.

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In many ways, the candidates have very different approaches to technology and innovation policy. Trump has focused more on reducing government barriers in the economy, including taxes and regulations that, among other things, limit innovation. The administration has taken this approach with a number of emerging technologies, including autonomous transportation systems and artificial intelligence (AI), pushing for an innovation principle-based approach. And while the Trump budgets have increased funding for research in some particular technology areas, especially AI, overall they have sought to cut government support for research.

While much of the focus of Biden's economic plan is on more traditional issues such as expanding health care and investing in physical infrastructure, the campaign has highlighted its support for significantly increased public investment in R&D and advanced production.

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Biden's approach to technology and innovation policy appears to be formulated to engage the government as an active partner alongside industry in setting a national technology and innovation agenda, as well as a tougher regulator of many technology industries. Moreover, a particular focus of the Biden agenda is to support innovation policy that accomplishes social policy goals, such as revitalizing economically distressed communities and regions.

Trump

- Has focused on reducing government barriers in the economy, including taxes and regulations that limit innovation.
- Trump budgets have proposed increased funding for research in some technology areas, especially emerging technologies such as AI, but also have sought to cut overall support for research.
- Rejects Washington consensus on trade policy and focuses on being tough on China with a largely unilateral approach.
- Budget proposals have cut funding for clean energy R&D.
- Has pushed back against greater immigration, including H1-B and L1 workers.
- For education and training, has pushed for less funding generally, but more support for apprenticeship programs. Also signed an executive order requiring the federal government to hire on the basis of capabilities, not degrees.
- Supports increased investment in rural broadband infrastructure.
- Embraces lighter regulations, lower business taxes, and a traditional consumer-welfare approach to antitrust—except for Internet platforms.
- Supports limiting Section 230 protections and potential antitrust enforcement against major Internet platforms.

Biden

- Policy approach formulated to engage government as both an active participant and industry in setting a technology agenda, particularly to achieve social goals and as a tougher regulator of many technology industries.
- Has highlighted support for significant increased public investment in R&D and advanced production.
- Questions Washington consensus on trade; is focused on being tough with China but supports a more multilateral approach than does Trump.
- Supports massive increases in clean energy R&D funding.
- Embraces the traditional Democratic approach on immigration, which has supported both in both high- and low-skill immigration.
- Has proposed significant increases in investment in education and skills training.
- Appears to support greater federal investment in rural broadband infrastructure than Trump.
- Supports higher taxes on businesses and large corporations; stronger regulations, including on privacy and broadband; and more aggressive antitrust enforcement, particularly on large Internet companies.
- Supports limiting Section 230 protections and potential antitrust enforcement against major Internet platforms.

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