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## **Wanted: 20,000 Young Americans to Fight Climate Change**

Lisa Friedman, *The New York Times*, 20 September 2023

President Biden intends to use executive authority to train and employ thousands of young people in jobs to fight global warming, Ali Zaidi, the White House national climate adviser, said on Tuesday.

The American Climate Corps, as the White House has named the organization, would provide young people with skills to work in wind and solar production, disaster preparedness and land conservation, Mr. Zaidi said. The White House expects about 20,000 recruits in the first year, he said.

The corps will create for young people a “pathway into the middle class and into a more sustainable future,” Mr. Zaidi said.

As an example, administration officials pointed to ForestCorp, a \$15 million program announced this week by AmeriCorps and the U.S. Forest Service to teach 80 people, between the ages of 18 to 26, wildfire prevention, reforestation and other skills. The program will pay about \$15 per hour and cover lodging and other benefits, according to a White House fact sheet.

Republicans have criticized the idea of a climate corps as wasted government money that would fund pipeline protests with taxpayer dollars.

Inspired by the Civilian Conservation Corps, the New Deal program that put millions of young men to work during the Great Depression, young climate activists have been lobbying for the creation of a climate corps.

Varshini Prakash, the co-founder of the youth-led Sunrise Movement, which advocates for action against climate change, said the corps was a response to “a generational rallying cry” to employ young Americans “to do the essential work of averting a climate catastrophe.”

One of Mr. Biden’s first executive orders called for the creation of a modern civilian corps that would “mobilize the next generation of conservation and resilience workers and maximize the creation of accessible training opportunities and good jobs.”

Some Democrats in Congress sought about \$30 billion for a climate corps as part of a sweeping clean energy law, but negotiators ultimately dropped the idea when finalizing the Inflation Reduction Act, which Mr. Biden signed last year.

Nevertheless, Democrats continued to pressure Mr. Biden to create a climate corps. “With deadly heat, dangerous floods, rising seas, and devastating wildfires — including those that ravaged Maui last month — the climate crisis demands a whole-of-government response at an unprecedented scale,” 50 members of Congress wrote in a letter to Mr. Biden this week.

The government will start a recruitment website for the American Climate Corps within months, Mr. Zaidi said.

402 words