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RICE UNIVERSITY'S  
**BAKER INSTITUTE**  
FOR PUBLIC POLICY

**News, Research and Events**

**January 14, 2021**



## Baker Institute releases policy recommendations for the new administration

As it has since 2008, the Baker Institute is releasing a series of policy recommendations for the incoming presidential administration. Focusing on issues from U.S. economic growth to climate change and immigration, the briefs are intended to provide decision-makers with effective ideas for navigating a complex domestic and foreign policy environment.

The first brief in the series, "[Time to Update America's Energy Security Programs](#)," considers the strategic and economic challenges of energy security in a transition to a lower-carbon energy future. Even as the U.S. has achieved energy self-sufficiency, "the U.S. still imports significant quantities of oil and natural gas, as well as solar panels and wind turbine components, and prices for all of these products reflect global market dynamics," write energy fellows [Mark Finley](#) and [Kenneth B. Medlock III](#). "The U.S. and its allies have a cooperative system for dealing with oil supply disruptions, including a large domestic strategic crude oil stockpile, but there is no similar domestic or international framework for dealing with other, emerging risks."

"The U.S. can aid the transition to a lower-carbon energy system by providing assurance that risks associated with that transition can be understood and managed, both at home and by working cooperatively with allies (as has long been the case for oil security)."

Read the authors' assessment of existing and emerging energy security risks, and recommendations for managing them, [here](#). Be sure to check the [Baker Institute website](#) in the coming days and weeks as newly published briefs are added to the series.

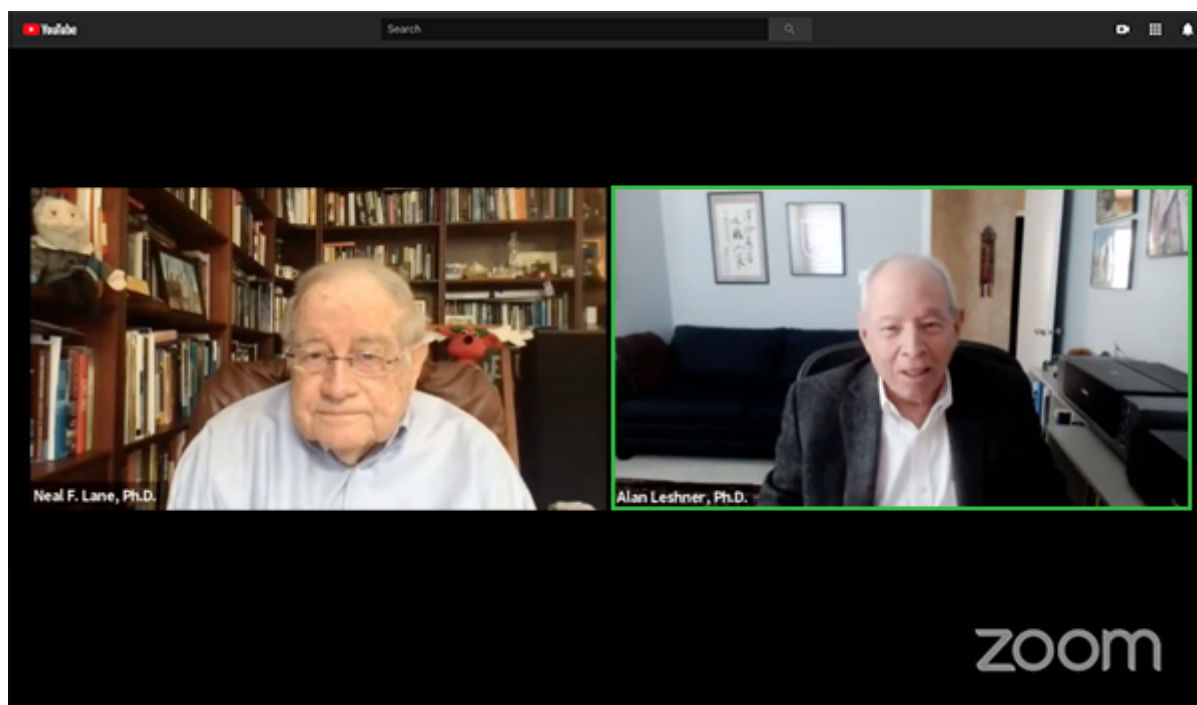
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*Alongside our fellow human beings, we are living in perilous times. This necessitates summoning all our wisdom, courage and resilience. However, we should also remain hopeful for a host of reasons, not least of which the extraordinary speed at which vaccines are being developed to fight the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the heroic work of health care workers worldwide, whom we salute.*

*As we aspire to a better world, much remains to be done: addressing socioeconomic inequalities, climate change, geostrategic challenges and the quest for peace. We at Rice University's Baker Institute shall continue to pursue our unwavering commitment to addressing vital public policy issues and offering solutions.*

*While we respect open debate to reach common ground, we condemn violence and hatred. In the words of Abraham Lincoln, "A house divided against itself cannot stand."*

Edward P. Djerejian, Director, Baker Institute for Public Policy



## Engaging in effective science dialogue

As COVID-19 cases surge and vaccine distribution continues to lag, health and science experts are grappling with a familiar question: how can scientific information be effectively communicated to the public?

[Alan Leshner](#), CEO Emeritus of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, recently joined a [Science and Technology Policy Program](#) webinar to discuss the issue and how to improve public trust in science. [Neal F. Lane](#), senior fellow in science and technology policy, provided welcome remarks at the event, which was the latest in the S&T program's [Civic Science Lecture Series](#).

Contrary to what some might assume as anti-vaccination campaigns spread, polling data shows that the public's regard for science has gone up during the pandemic, said Leshner. "The vast majority of people do believe that science is good for us," he said.

The difficulty in communicating scientific knowledge, he said, emerges when broaching topics that conflict with people's core beliefs and values, religious and otherwise. Economic considerations and political convenience also make science less persuasive among the public and policymakers. In these cases, science experts mistakenly tend to try to educate people on controversial issues, when a more effective response would be to engage in a thoughtful discussion, said Leshner.

Both Leshner and Lane noted that science communication is a learned skill, particularly when dealing with complex topics and an ever-changing body of knowledge. Leshner also discussed the obligations of the scientific community to call out misinformation and avoid hyperbole. "People don't make decisions based solely on science. Decisions are based on a combination of facts and values, just like policy is based on facts and values," he said. "If you want to engage with the public, it has to become a dialogue, a respectful dialogue."

To learn more, watch the full presentation on the [event page](#).

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## Upcoming Events

**Webinar — A new chapter in the U.S.-Mexico relationship: What to expect in 2021-2025.** A panel of experts discusses the opportunities and challenges that both nations will face — including climate change, trade and security issues — and how they can move toward a more cooperative future. **January 21 | 11:00 am**

**Davoudi Emerging Leaders Lecture Series: The Director's views on the foreign policy challenges of the Biden administration.** The Davoudi Emerging Leaders Lecture Series is exclusive to members of the [Roundtable Young Professionals](#) and will be held once per month from January through May 2021. Each event in the series will feature a conversation about public policy fundamentals, practical information on working in the public policy sphere, and the charge and impact of the Baker Institute itself. At this event, Baker Institute Director Ambassador [Edward Djerejian](#) visits with former foreign service officer and RYP member Milessa Lowrie to discuss his career in diplomacy and analyze the foreign policy challenges facing the incoming Biden administration. **January 22 | 8:30 am**

Visit our [events page](#) for a complete list.

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## Get Involved with the Baker Institute

Become a member of the [Baker Institute Roundtable](#) and [Roundtable Young Professionals](#). Contact [our development office](#) for more information on how you can join the conversation on the relevant issues and ideas that shape our world.



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