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Trump's EPA repeals landmark climate finding in gift to 'billionaire polluters'

Rollback of government's ability to limit climate-heating pollution will make families 'sicker and less safe', environmental advocate says.

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The [Trump administration](#) has revoked the bedrock scientific determination that gives the government the ability to regulate climate-heating pollution. The move was described as a gift to "billionaire polluters" at the expense of Americans' health.

The endangerment finding, which states that the buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere endangers public health and welfare, has since 2009 allowed the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to limit heat-trapping pollution from vehicles, power plants and other industrial sources.

Donald Trump called the move "the single largest deregulatory action in American history".

"This is a big one if you're into environment," he told reporters on Thursday. "This is about as big as it gets."

The move comes as part of Trump's bigger anti-environment push, which has seen him roll back pollution rules and boost oil and gas.

On social media, Barack Obama said the repeal will leave Americans "less safe, less healthy and less able to fight climate change – all so the fossil fuel industry can make even more money".

The former secretary of state John Kerry called the new rule "un-American".

"Repealing the Endangerment Finding takes Orwellian governance to new heights and invites enormous damage to people and property around the world," said Kerry, who also served as Joe Biden's climate envoy. "Ignoring warning signs will not stop the storm. It puts more Americans directly in its path."

The final rule removes the government's ability to impose requirements to track, report and limit climate-heating pollution from cars and trucks. Transportation is the largest source of climate pollution in the US.

It does not apply to regulations on stationary sources of emissions such as power plants and fossil fuel infrastructure, which are regulated under a separate section of the Clean Air Act, but it will open the door to end those standards, too.

Trump's EPA has separately proposed to find that emissions from power plants "do not contribute significantly to dangerous air pollution" and therefore should not be regulated. Joseph Goffman, who served as EPA air chief under Joe Biden, expects the agency will apply their vehicles-focused arguments to stationary polluters in order to kill the endangerment finding for

all sources of greenhouse gas emissions.

“Instead of the entire house of cards of all EPA climate regulation collapsing all at once today, it’s going to be like a row of dominoes falling,” said Goffman, who helped write and implement the Clean Air Act and worked directly on the endangerment finding.

Environmental advocates have condemned the move as illegal. A slew of green groups have promised to take the EPA to court over the rollback, as has the [state of California](#).

“If this reckless decision survives legal challenges, it will lead to more deadly wildfires, more extreme heat deaths, more climate-driven floods and droughts, and greater threats to communities nationwide – all while the EPA dismisses the overwhelming science that has protected public health for decades,” Gavin Newsom, the California governor, said in a statement.

The move marks “the most aggressive, ruthless act of dismantling public health protections in the agency’s 55-year history”, said Dominique Browning, director and co-founder of environmental advocacy group Moms Clean Air Force.

In a [press release](#), the EPA said the move [will save the US](#) \$1.3tn, while Trump said Thursday that the move “will save American consumers trillions of dollars”.

The EPA administrator, Lee Zeldin, said the Obama and Biden administrations used the endangerment finding “to steamroll into existence a leftwing wish list of costly climate policies”.

“Who paid the biggest price? Hardworking families, small businesses, millions of Americans who just want a reliable, affordable car to get to work or take their kids to school or go to

church on Sunday,” he said.

But though the rollback could save some corporations money, experts note it could take a massive toll on ordinary Americans’ wellbeing and pocketbooks.

One [analysis](#) from green group Environmental Defense Fund found the full repeal of the endangerment finding combined with Trump’s proposal to roll back motor vehicle standards would result in as much as 18bn more tons of planet-warming pollution by 2055 – the same as the annual emissions of China, the world’s top polluter – and would [impose up to \\$4.7tn](#) in additional expenses tied to harmful climate and air pollution by that time.

Zeldin submitted the repeal of the legal determination for [White House review last month](#). In July, he officially announced plans to [repeal the finding](#), justifying the proposal with a widely criticized energy department report questioning climate science.

The agency received half a million comments on the proposal. Last month, a federal judge [said the July energy department report](#) was created unlawfully.

In the repeal of the endangerment finding, the EPA is claiming that the Clean Air Act is only meant to regulate pollution “that harms health or the environment through local and regional exposure”. But there is consensus that by trapping heat in the atmosphere, greenhouse gas emissions are intensifying dangerous extreme weather events, allowing [diseases to spread faster](#), and worsening illnesses from allergies to [lung disease](#).

Trump described the finding as “the legal foundation for the green new scam”, which he claimed “the Obama and Biden administration used to destroy countless jobs”.

But the new rule will have ruinous consequences for working-class Americans, said Jason Walsh, executive director of BlueGreen Alliance, a coalition of labor unions and environmental groups.

“Billionaires like Donald Trump don’t suffer the devastation of climate change,” he said. “Working people do.”

The rollback comes one month after the [Trump administration](#) announced it will pull the US from the foundational UN agreement to address the climate crisis, as well as the world’s leading body of climate scientists. Over the past year, Zeldin has also launched an all-out assault on climate, air, water and chemical protections. The EPA has also removed crucial climate-focused science and data from its webpages.

“This is all part of the Trump administration’s authoritarian playbook to replace facts with propaganda, to enrich a few while harming the rest of us,” said Rachel Cleetus, senior policy director for the climate and energy program at the science advocacy group the Union of Concerned Scientists. “Administrator Zeldin has fully abdicated EPA’s responsibility to protect our health and the environment.”

The EPA has said that it determined the US would save billions annually by revoking the endangerment determination. But the agency’s analysis did not account for the money and lives saved by the environmental and public-health protections that the change would eliminate, experts say.

Alex Witt, senior adviser at green advocacy group Climate Power, said: “Zeldin and Trump are telling our families: we’ll let you get sicker and watch your healthcare costs skyrocket as long as oil and

gas CEOs can profit.”

“This decision makes it abundantly clear that Trump is willing to make our families sicker and less safe, all to benefit a few billionaire polluters,” said Witt.

Some industry groups have been reluctant to support the full rollback of the endangerment finding. The [American Petroleum Institute](#), the top US oil lobby group, last month said it backed a repeal of the endangerment finding for vehicles, but not for stationary sources of pollution like power plants.

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