

Trump administration rescinds EPA Endangerment Finding: Corporate America's license to kill

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The Trump administration on Thursday finalized its rescission of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 2009 Greenhouse Gas Endangerment Finding, the scientific and legal determination that carbon dioxide, methane and four other greenhouse gases endanger public health. It has served as the legal basis for nearly all federal regulation of greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles, power plants, oil and gas wells and every other industrial facility for the past 17 years.

The move eliminates all federal greenhouse gas emission standards for vehicles of model years 2012 through 2027 and beyond, ends all vehicle emissions measurement and reporting requirements, and strips the EPA of its authority to track, report and limit emissions that contribute to global warming from any source.

The rescission is a declaration by the American capitalist class that there will be no restrictions on its ability to pollute the environment, no matter the consequences in human lives. People will die as a result of this action, in large numbers and over an extended period. An estimated 100,000 Americans already die every year from air pollution, whose primary cause is the burning of fossil fuels, and the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) estimates the rescission will kill another 58,000 on top of that by 2055.

Its research also estimates that the higher pollution will induce an additional 37 million asthma attacks in that time frame, causing up to 92,000 hospital and emergency room visits and costing workers and youth 15 million lost school and work days. The total cost borne by the working class will be upwards of \$500 billion.

The scientific basis of the endangerment finding was the accumulated evidence going back as far as 1896 that certain chemical compounds in the atmosphere, above all, carbon dioxide, play a critical role in warming Earth's atmosphere.

That research has been affirmed again and again throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. The Keeling Curve was first published in 1958 to measure the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Various atmospheric models were developed in the 1980s, including by oil companies, such as Exxon (now ExxonMobil), which fairly accurately predicted that the global average surface temperature of Earth would increase by about 1.0 degree Celsius by 2020. In 2021, the Nobel Prize in Physics was awarded for pioneering work in understanding climate change.

Since 1990, the United Nations has published regular Intergovernmental Panels on Climate Change (IPCC) reports, each summarizing the most recent data on climate science and each further establishing that capitalist industrial activity was actively increasing

the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, which was directly contributing to global warming.

The most recent of these reports, which finished publication in 2023, directly connects climate change to extreme weather events—more powerful hurricanes, more intense wildfires, longer droughts, more destructive floods—which have killed millions globally.

As the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine stated in 2025, “the evidence for current and future harm to human health and welfare created by human-caused greenhouse gases is beyond scientific dispute.”

Trump and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lee Zeldin have made no attempt to refute the endangerment finding on its scientific merits. They instead relied on a group described by the Union of Concerned Scientists as “five hand-picked skeptics of the effects of climate change,” which produced a report that “misrepresents the state of climate science by cherry-picking evidence, exaggerating uncertainties, and ignoring decades of peer-reviewed research.” Even internal reviewers from the Department of Energy were forced to mark this report as “misleading” and “factually incorrect.”

The action takes place amid an accelerating series of climate catastrophes. Since 1980, the United States alone has experienced 426 weather and climate disasters that caused at least \$1 billion in damages. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), there were 33 such events in the 1980s (3.3 a year), 57 in the 1990s, 67 in the 2000s, 131 in the 2010s and 115 from 2020-2024.

And in 2025 alone, there were 23 such disasters, causing 276 deaths and \$115 billion in damage. The Los Angeles wildfires caused over \$60 billion in destruction; a JAMA study found the true death toll was approximately 440, nearly 15 times the official count. Flash floods in central Texas killed 135 people. Hurricane Helene killed 232 and caused \$78.7 billion in damage, with climate change responsible for almost half the economic losses.

Heatwaves in Europe, mass flooding in China and Tropical Cyclone Senyar are just some of the examples of at least 32 other such disasters that occurred around the world last year.

The rescission is part of a systematic campaign. In January, the EPA moved to exclude health impacts of fine particulate matter and ozone from regulatory cost-benefit analyses, reducing the value placed on human life to zero. The administration has eliminated the EPA's Office of Research and Development, is cutting the entire agency's workforce by 25 percent and terminating over a thousand scientists. It

has stopped publishing greenhouse gas emissions data, abolished the Clean Air Act Advisory Committee, halted offshore wind projects and ordered coal plants scheduled for closure to continue operating.

Both the rollback of environmental regulations and the gutting of the workforce to enforce the regulations is the outcome of a conscious policy of, by and for the corporate oligarchy. According to the advocacy group Climate Power, the oil and gas industry spent \$450 million to influence Trump and the 119th Congress, including \$96 million directly to Trump's campaign. Zeldin received over \$410,000 from the industry, with additional undisclosed funds channeled through dark money organizations.

Such expenses are now going to be paid back in full and with colossal interest. The official announcement of the rescission claimed that "over \$1.3 trillion" will be saved as a result of the deregulation. In other words, \$1.3 trillion that would have otherwise been spent on keeping the atmosphere clean and saving lives is now going into the pockets of the oil executives and their patsies.

The knock-on costs of higher polluting vehicles will be equally immense. The EDF predicts that increased fuel costs from less efficient vehicles will cost American workers \$1.4 trillion by 2055. And the costs of maintenance will outweigh whatever claimed benefits from the Trump administration by another \$450 million.

The enrichment of the oligarchy and the impoverishment of the working class, which the endangerment finding rescission will massively accelerate, are two sides of the same process. The "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" hands the richest 1 percent \$117 billion in tax cuts in 2026, while the Congressional Budget Office projects the lowest 10 percent of earners will see incomes fall by 3.1 percent. The same legislation phases out clean energy tax credits while expanding oil drilling on public land. Elon Musk, who added \$187 billion to his fortune in 2025 while leading the DOGE effort that gutted the EPA, has seen his net worth surpass \$800 billion.

The denial of climate science that underlies this action is not confined to the Republican Party. It is the same systematic assault on science that characterized the response of both the Republicans and Democrats to the COVID-19 pandemic, in which public health was subordinated to corporate profit. More than 1.5 Americans and at least 30 million worldwide have died and billions more face the continued ravages of this now totally unchecked pathogen.

Addressing climate change has always been rejected by the American ruling elite. The Clinton administration pointedly refused to ratify the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. Its participation in the 2015 Paris Agreement was grudging under Obama, immediately revoked under Trump's first term, rejoined by Biden as a public relations exercise and revoked again. Even the touted "Green New Deal" of the pseudo-left, championed by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), was always based around accommodations to the oil and gas industry.

The irrationality of the attitude of the capitalists is demonstrated by the fact that renewable energy is already cheaper than fossil fuels. Utility-scale solar and onshore wind have been the cheapest forms of new power generation for 10 consecutive years. Battery storage costs have declined 93 percent since 2010. Solar panel prices have fallen 90 percent since 2009. China invested \$627 billion in clean energy in 2025 and installed more than 430 gigawatts of wind and solar—more than the rest of the world combined.

The technology for a full transition to clean energy exists, but the American ruling class is blocking it. The United States is now

producing a record 13.6 million barrels of oil per day. Tariffs of 175 percent on Chinese solar panels and 100 percent on Chinese electric vehicles prevent American workers from accessing the cheapest clean energy technology on the planet. The government hands the fossil fuel industry \$30 to \$35 billion per year in direct subsidies. In the first quarter of 2025, \$7.7 billion in clean manufacturing projects were cancelled.

Record US oil production began under Biden, who pledged, "No more drilling on federal lands, period" and then presided over record drilling on those same lands. The Inflation Reduction Act was passed only by mandating 2 million acres of federal land for oil and gas leasing before any renewable lease could be issued. The war in Ukraine, backed by both parties, transformed the US into Europe's primary gas supplier—LNG exports to the EU nearly quadrupled—entrenching fossil fuel dependency for decades.

There is an objective logic to this. At an earlier period, American capitalism felt it had enough wealth to concede certain social programs, including environmental protections, in response to the surge of the class struggle in the 1960s and 1970s. Like every other gain won by the working class, these concessions are now being clawed back. The crisis of the capitalist system has reached the point where the drive to increase the rate of profit is incompatible with any restriction on corporate activity, no matter the human cost.

The technology for clean energy exists. The science is beyond dispute. But the defense of the environment, the defense of public health, the fight against climate change and the fight for a scientific understanding of the world—these fall to the international working class. What stands in the way is the private ownership of the means of production by a corporate oligarchy that will destroy civilization before it accepts any limitation on its wealth.

The expropriation of the fossil fuel industry, the transformation of energy production into a publicly owned utility under the democratic control of working people and the rational reorganization of the global economy must be critical parts of a political struggle by the international working class to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism.



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