

# EPA And Zeldin Actions

## Executive Summary

Under President Donald Trump and Administrator Lee Zeldin, the Environmental Protection Agency has initiated a systematic reversal of environmental and public health protections. The administration's actions fall into four key categories – a multi-pronged effort to weaken key safeguards, defund critical programs, dismantle scientific research, and politicize the agency's staff and leadership:

- **Gutting Protections:** Key protections limiting industrial pollution have been weakened or eliminated. The administration has systematically reduced enforcement and targeted foundational safeguards on greenhouse gases, mercury, PFAS chemicals, and other pollutants, while also moving to roll back energy efficiency standards.
- **Weaponizing DOJ Against Climate Funding and Grants:** Trump and Zeldin are manufacturing meritless DOJ investigations, despite being rebuked by federal judges and prosecutors, in their attempts to claw back \$20 billion in climate grants intended to lower electricity costs, create jobs, deliver clean air and water, and support housing initiatives. Grants for environmental justice and children's health research have also been canceled.
- **Elimination of Scientific Research:** The administration has shut down critical research facilities, including those studying the health effects of air pollution, and has announced its intent to eliminate the EPA's primary scientific research office. This undermines the science-based policymaking that is central to the agency's mission.
- **Agency Reorganization and Politicization:** Scientific advisory boards have been dismissed and concurrently, the agency has undergone deep staffing cuts, firing scientific and regulatory experts, while top leadership positions have been filled by individuals with connections to regulated industries.

Collectively, these moves represent a reversal of decades of environmental policy. They will increase harmful pollutants in the nation's air and water, with dangerous and long-lasting consequences for public health and the environment.

# Trump's EPA Sought To Overturn The Endangerment Finding And Loosen Protections Against Pollution

## Trump's EPA Sought To Overturn The Endangerment Finding

1. Trump signed an executive order that directed the EPA to reconsider the [pollution endangerment finding](#).
2. Trump's EPA recommended [reversing](#) its 2009 endangerment finding, which declared that greenhouse gas emissions damaged human health.
3. In March, Trump's EPA [announced](#) it would seek to overturn the endangerment finding, and Zeldin [said](#) in April that there would be a rulemaking process to do so.
4. The Trump administration [drafted a proposed rule](#) to repeal the endangerment finding.
  - a. The proposal also [called to rescind](#) tailpipe emissions limits.

## Trump's EPA Sought To Loosen Protections Against Pollution

5. Trump's [Environmental Protection Agency announced that it would take "31" actions](#) on environmental and health protections. More details on the actions below, [here](#).
  - a. Reconsideration of standards for power plants
  - b. Reconsideration of oil and gas industry standards (O000 b/c)
  - c. Reconsideration of Mercury and Air Toxics Standards (MATS)
  - d. Reconsideration of the Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program
  - e. Reconsideration of standards for the Steam Electric Power Generating Industry
  - f. Reconsideration of wastewater standards for oil and gas extraction facilities
  - g. Reconsideration of the Risk Management Program rule for chemical plants and refineries
  - h. Reconsideration of light-duty, medium-duty, and heavy-duty vehicle standards
  - i. Reconsideration of the 2009 endangerment finding and standards that rely on the finding

- j. Reconsideration of the Technology Transition Rule
  - k. Reconsideration of Particulate Matter National Ambient Air Quality Standards (PM 2.5 NAAQS)
  - l. Reconsideration of multiple National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants for American energy and manufacturing sectors (NESHAPs)
  - m. Restructuring the Regional Haze Program
  - n. Overhauling the Social Cost of Carbon
  - o. Redirecting enforcement resources
  - p. Ending Environmental Justice and DEI arms of the Environmental Protection Agency
  - q. Ending the Good Neighbor Program
  - r. Approving State Implementation Plans and Tribal Implementation Plans
  - s. Reconsideration of exceptional events rulemaking
  - t. Reconstituting Science Advisory Board and Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (SAB/CASAC)
  - u. Rushing state coal ash permit reviews and updating coal ash protections (CCR Rule)
  - v. Utilizing enforcement discretion for North Carolina's recovery from Hurricane Helene
6. Zeldin announced that the EPA proposed [repealing](#) rules that limited power plant emissions of greenhouse gases and mercury.
  7. Trump's EPA [withdrew a 2024 draft proposal](#) for new industrial air pollution permitting standards, which was intended to improve implementation and enforcement.

<b>Trump's EPA Loosened Standards For PFAS</b>
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8. Trump [withdrew a proposed rule](#) that would have limited industrial discharges of PFAS.
9. The Trump Administration planned to [reverse](#) state-level bans on PFAS and other pollutants by changing the way the Environmental Protection Agency conducts chemical risk evaluations.

10. Trump's EPA announced plans to [roll back](#) limits on four types of PFAS, give utilities two more years to comply with limits, and provide opportunities for exemptions.
11. The EPA [asked for an extension](#) for more time to put together a PFAS standards plan.

### **Trump's EPA Ended Enforcement Of Standards For Industry**

12. Trump's Environmental Protection Agency [instructed](#) staff to ease pollution enforcement at energy facilities.
13. Trump's EPA limited the [enforcement](#) of oil and gas companies in the Midwest.
14. Trump's EPA offered coal-fired power plants and other industrial polluters [exemptions](#) from emissions reduction requirements through an [email address](#) specifically for companies to ask for permission to bypass restrictions.
15. Trump's EPA granted [nearly 70](#) two-year exemptions to power plants from emissions reduction requirements for toxic chemicals like mercury, arsenic, and benzene.
  - a. Trump's EPA granted [extensions](#) to nine lignite-coal-fueled plants to meet mercury emissions limits. Lignite ranked among the industry's highest emitters of mercury.
16. Trump's EPA granted two steelmakers [extensions](#) on air toxics rules compliance.
17. Trump's EPA planned to propose [extending](#) compliance deadlines for a rule that required coal plants to eliminate pollutants from wastewater.
18. The EPA pushed back the deadlines by [another year](#) for utilities to report contamination from toxic coal ash landfills, install groundwater monitoring systems, and begin drafting plans to clean up the pollution.
19. Trump's EPA proposed allowing [Texas](#) to oversee its own carbon capture and storage permitting.
20. Trump [issued a series of orders](#) exempting coal-fired power plants, iron ore processors, chemical manufacturers, and medical device sterilizers from EPA standards.

## Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act Stripped The EPA Of Tools To Monitor And Fight Pollution

21. [Section 60004](#) of the OBBBA rescinds unobligated IRA funds for modernizing air monitoring and tracking pollution. The EPA [planned](#) to upgrade monitoring for ozone, soot, air toxics, and fenceline communities.
22. [Section 60009](#) of the OBBBA rescinds unobligated IRA funds for improving the EPA data systems for environmental compliance.
23. [Section 60014](#) of the OBBBA rescinds funds for hiring and training EPA staff for environmental reviews.

## Trump's EPA Cancelled Grants And Targeted The Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund

### Trump's EPA Targeted The Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund With Meritless Investigations Despite Being Rebuked By Judges

24. After taking office, Zeldin [almost immediately](#) called on Citibank to return Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund money and issued a release that they had found “gold bars” a reference to malfeasance.
25. Zeldin said the Environmental Protection Agency [planned](#) to revoke tens of thousands of projects that were expected to receive funding through the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF).
26. Trump's EPA [referred the disbursements](#) to GGRF recipients to the EPA's Inspector General, who [opened an investigation](#) into the Solar For All program.
27. Zeldin announced that he had [terminated](#) \$20 billion in climate grants under the Inflation Reduction Act, citing [concerns](#) about the integrity of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund and fraud.
  - a. GGRF grant recipients sued the EPA for [breach of contract](#), and they [have been litigating](#) the EPA's termination of the grants.
  - b. Despite Zeldin's [public claims](#), the judge overseeing the suit found that the government failed to show “[any evidence](#) with regard to malfeasance.”
28. Trump's DOJ attempted to help Zeldin by [pressuring the D.C.](#) U.S. Attorney's office to open a criminal investigation into and freeze the assets associated with GGRF recipients.

- a. The head of the criminal division of the D.C. U.S. Attorney's office [resigned in protest](#) and concluded that there [wasn't sufficient evidence](#) to freeze recipients' assets.
  - b. Regardless of the resignation, the DOJ approached another U.S. Attorney's office to launch a grand jury investigation, but prosecutors [rejected the request](#).
  - c. Despite the resignation, the D.C. U.S. Attorney's office continued with the investigation, was [rejected by a federal judge](#) for a seizure warrant, and was [unable to find evidence of a crime](#).
29. Trump [signed the OBBBA](#), which sought to repeal the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, and rescind any unspent funds despite only \$19 million being unobligated.

### **Trump's EPA Cancelled Critical Grants And Funding**

30. Trump's Environmental Protection Agency planned to [cancel grants](#) used to study environmental hazards children face.
31. Trump's EPA put Community Change Grants Program [projects under review](#).
32. Trump's EPA planned to cancel nearly [800](#) environmental justice grants.
- a. Trump's EPA terminated a \$1 million grant to address flooding in [Philadelphia](#).
  - b. Trump's EPA [canceled](#) nine contracts, worth \$60 million, that it said were related to DEI and environmental justice.

### **Trump's EPA Audited The Solar For All Program**

33. The Trump EPA's Inspector General [launched](#) an audit of the Solar for All program.

### **Trump's EPA Ended Critical Research**

34. Trump's EPA announced that it would [wind down](#) activities at the Office of Research and Development Research Center.
35. Trump's EPA said it would [eliminate](#) its scientific research arm and [fire thousands of staff](#).
36. The Trump administration shut down the EPA's Human Research Facility that studied how air [pollution](#) harmed human health.

## Trump's EPA Planned To Roll Back Energy Efficiency Standards

37. Trump's EPA planned to shut down the [Energy Star](#) program.

## Trump's EPA Cut International Cooperation

38. Trump's EPA missed the April 15 deadline for developed countries to submit data on U.S. [climate emissions](#) to the United Nations.

## Trump Sought To Reorganize The EPA, Fired Staff, And Appointed Industry Insiders To Positions Of Power

### Trump's EPA Fired Hundreds And Planned To Fire Nearly Four Thousand Staff

- 39. Trump's EPA cut [840 staff positions and planned to cut another 1,100](#).
- 40. Trump's EPA put 139 [employees](#) on leave who criticized the administration's rollback of environmental protections.
- 41. Trump's EPA said it would [eliminate](#) its scientific research arm and fire [3,700 staff](#).
- 42. Shortly after Trump took office, Acting EPA Administrator James Payne [fired](#) all members of the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee and the Science Advisory Board.

### Trump Sought To Reorganize The EPA And Give Employees Little Input

- 43. Following a SCOTUS ruling, the EPA [resumed its efforts to reorganize](#) and restructure and gave employees little input on their potential new work.

### Trump Appointed Industry Insiders To Positions Of Power

- 44. Top appointees in Trump's EPA had connections to industries regulated by the agency.
  - a. Two chemical industry [executives](#), Nancy Beck and Lynn Ann Dekleva, were appointed to oversee chemical standards at the EPA.
  - b. Alex Dominguez, Zeldin's Deputy Assistant Administrator, previously worked for the [American Petroleum Institute](#).
  - c. Abbie Tardif, a Deputy Assistant Administrator, [previously worked](#) for Marathon Petroleum.

- d. Aaron Szabo, the EPA [Assistant Administrator for the Office of Air and Radiation](#), previously [lobbied](#) on behalf of the American Chemistry Council, the American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers Association, and the American Petroleum Institute.
- e. Trump's [Deputy EPA Administrator](#), David Fotouhi, earned millions in legal fees from [clients](#) including Chevron, Sunoco Pipeline, and CSX.

## Trump's EPA Met With Extremists And Musk's Conflicted Company

- 45. Zeldin met with Alex Epstein in March, a [fossil fuel advocate](#) and lobbyist.
  - a. Epstein's firm, Energy Freedom, [lobbied](#) the EPA to overhaul its Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program. In March, Zeldin announced that the EPA would reconsider the program.
- 46. Zeldin met with xAI, Elon Musk's AI company, which had multiple [pending](#) air pollution issues before the EPA.