

# How the Trump Administration's Agenda To Eliminate Environmental Protections and Promote the Fossil Fuel Industry Harms Public Health

By Cathleen Kelly and Jasia Smith April 2, 2025

The majority of Americans [value](#) their fundamental freedom to breathe clean air, drink safe water, and live in healthy communities. Roughly 75 percent of Americans are [concerned](#) about air and water pollution, and 80 percent [support](#) expanding federal funding to communities with excessive amounts of pollution in their air and water.

**See also:**

[“The Trump Administration’s Cancellation of Funding for Environmental Protections Endangers Americans’ Health While Draining Their Wallets”](#)

Despite this strong support, the Trump administration is [abandoning](#) environmental protections at the expense of [public health](#) and safety, as [planned](#) in Project 2025 and [promised](#) by President Donald Trump to oil executives to boost their profits in exchange for campaign contributions. These protections include air quality standards for smog, soot, and air toxics, as well as emission requirements for power plants, vehicles, coal waste, and oil refineries. The Trump administration’s [plans](#) to roll back tailpipe and smokestack standards alone [will increase pollution, putting](#) the lives of millions of Americans at risk and potentially leading to more than 100 million asthma attacks and [200,000 premature deaths](#) over the next 25 years. If implemented, the administration’s [plans](#) to roll back environmental protections would also increase climate pollution—putting Americans’ health and safety and the economy at risk from more [frequent, intense, and costly fires, hurricanes, storms, and floods](#).

Meanwhile, the Trump administration has [offered](#) companies the option to send an email asking the president to temporarily exempt them from compliance with [limits](#) on mercury—which can damage the brain and nervous system and lead to serious developmental problems among infants and children—and other clean air protections.

In addition, President Trump and his administration committed to [slashing](#) the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) budget by 65 percent and [dismantling](#) the scientific research arm of the agency, which would make it [impossible](#) for the agency to fulfill its mission of ensuring that all Americans—regardless of income, ZIP code, or race—can breathe clean air and drink clean water. The Trump administration has also [canceled funding](#) for programs that reduce pollution and protect public health.

By [shuttering](#) the EPA's environmental justice offices, the Trump administration is ending efforts to cut deadly pollution that is concentrated in working-class and low-income communities. All of these moves would simply enrich billionaires at the expense of the American people's health.

This fact sheet contains more information on how pollution and the Trump administration's plan to eliminate environmental protections threatens the health and lives of Americans.

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## **Pollution from power plants, industrial facilities, diesel- and gas-powered vehicles and equipment, and other sources threatens public health**

- Air pollution threatens public health by [shortening](#) lives and increasing the risk of cancer, asthma, heart and lung disease, heart attacks, strokes, and premature birth, among other health conditions. Poor air quality is estimated to be responsible for more than [100,000 premature deaths](#) in the United States each year.
- Air pollution from fossil fuels costs each American an average of [\\$2,500 per year](#) in health care expenses—a nationwide total of more than [\\$820 billion per year](#).
- The Trump administration plans to cancel critical environmental protections, including air pollution standards for smokestacks and tailpipes. Rolling back these standards would increase pollution, [causing](#) more than 100 million asthma attacks and 200,000 premature deaths by 2050.
- Power plants, industrial facilities, diesel- and gas-powered vehicles and equipment, and other sources [emit](#) particle pollution—including coarse particles (particulate matter 10), fine particles (PM<sub>2.5</sub>), and ultrafine particles (PM<sub>0.1</sub>)—as well as nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxides, which can become fine particles, into the air we breathe. Fine and ultrafine particles, also known as soot, can [travel](#) deep into the lungs, air sacs, and bloodstream, harming vital organs such as the heart and brain as well as the cardiovascular system.
- Studies show that roughly [48,000 premature deaths](#) per year in the United States can be attributed to PM<sub>2.5</sub> pollution—with some estimates indicating as many as [85,000 to 200,000 excess deaths](#) every year. Even short-term and low-level [exposure](#) to PM<sub>2.5</sub> can be deadly; can cause higher rates of infant mortality and more severe asthma attacks; and can increase hospital admissions for heart disease, heart attacks, strokes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and childhood asthma.

- Studies have also consistently [shown](#) that breathing in high concentrations of particle pollution year-round can lead to early death from cardiovascular and respiratory problems, including heart disease, stroke, influenza, pneumonia, lung cancer, and other health problems.
- For pregnant people, fetuses, and children, year-round exposure to PM<sub>2.5</sub> can lead to preterm birth; fetal and infant death; impaired neurological, cognitive, and lung development; and a higher likelihood of asthma among children.
- Similar to particle pollution, long-term exposure to ozone, or smog, can [increase the risk](#) of brain inflammation and cognitive decline, reproductive and developmental harm, metabolic disorders, and new asthma cases in children.
- In 2024, the American Lung Association found that 39 percent of Americans—[131.2 million](#) people—live in counties with failing grades for levels of soot and ozone in the air, 11.7 million more Americans than in 2023.

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## **Pollution is unfairly concentrated in working-class, low-income, Black, and Hispanic communities**

- Low-income communities, along with Black, Hispanic, and other communities of color, are [more likely](#) than white and wealthier neighborhoods to live with [unsafe air quality](#) and [drinking water](#) and near [toxic waste](#) sites.
- The dirtiest and most inefficient power plants are too often [located](#) in low-income, working-class, Black, and Hispanic communities, as well as in other communities of color. These communities [experience](#) higher rates of [cancer](#), asthma, and other life-threatening health problems.
- Black and Hispanic Americans are unfairly [exposed](#) to [56 percent and 63 percent](#) more soot pollution, respectively, than they produce.
- Communities of color are [3.7 times](#) more likely than white communities to live with high levels of air pollution.
- In addition, Black Americans are [75 percent](#) more likely than white Americans to live near polluting industrial facilities.
- For example, in Louisiana’s “Cancer Alley,” where residents are predominantly Black and low income, the cancer risk is nearly [50 times higher](#) than the national average due to 150 nearby chemical plants and oil refineries.

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## The Trump administration is increasing energy costs for families by prioritizing oil and gas industry interests and undermining clean energy investments

- Over the past three years, clean energy investments have helped reduce the country's vulnerability to energy price volatility and are [lowering overall energy costs](#) by decreasing fossil fuel demand.
- By approving new liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals, the Trump administration would raise household electricity bills by [\\$100 per month](#). Repealing the Inflation Reduction Act's clean energy incentives, as Republicans in Congress [aim](#) to do, would [increase](#) household electricity costs by more than \$110 in 2026, threaten more than \$500 billion in planned economic investment, and cost roughly [790,000 jobs](#) in 2030 and more than 700,000 jobs in 2035—compared with a “business as usual” scenario with the incentives left in place.
- More than 30 million U.S. households—or roughly [one-quarter](#)—are already [unable](#) to meet their energy needs, and [78 percent](#) of Americans are stressed about high energy bills.
- Low-income, Black, Latino, and Indigenous communities experience the [highest rates](#) of energy insecurity due to economic inequality and poor-quality housing tied to unfair housing and other policies:
  - [Fifty-two percent](#) of Black and American Indian or Alaska Native households experience some form of energy insecurity.
  - On average, Black households pay [\\$1.6 billion](#) more in energy expenses per year compared with other racial groups.
  - [Forty-seven percent](#) of Hispanic households experience energy insecurity, compared with 25 percent of non-Hispanic households.

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## The federal government must protect the fundamental freedom of all Americans to breathe clean air, drink clean water, and live in healthy communities

Americans need a government that works for everyone, not just wealthy corporate donors and billionaires. To protect public health and safety and lower household costs, Americans need a government that will strengthen environmental protections by:

- Expanding access to clean renewable energy to reduce pollution and lower energy costs
- Incentivizing clean energy storage to replace fossil-fueled peaker plants in communities on the front lines of dangerous pollution and climate change effects

- Implementing strong pollution standards that protect public health and prevent harms to communities unfairly exposed to high concentrations of pollution from multiple sources
- Preventing the permitting, siting, or expansion of fossil fuel projects and polluting industrial facilities in communities already struggling to cope with the health risks tied to heavy pollution burdens
- Ensuring [cool and healthy homes for all](#) by investing in efficient and cost-effective heat pump air conditioning and programs that will lower electricity costs for households, reduce pollution, and protect low-income and working-class families from dangerous heat

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## Conclusion

These and other actions are essential to safeguarding the right of all Americans to breathe clean air, drink clean water, and live in healthy communities. The Trump administration's plan to abandon environmental protections would rob Americans of this right and threaten their health and lives—all to boost corporate polluter profits.

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*If reading this fact sheet in print, you can find source links in the online version at <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/how-the-trump-administrations-agenda-to-eliminate-environmental-protections-and-promote-the-fossil-fuel-industry-harms-public-health/>.*