

**The alliance's aggressive lobbying of the Trump administration and efforts to dispute climate science clearly played a significant role in EPA's efforts to undercut the regulations that would yield a major reduction in one of the primary sources of pollution in the country, said Daniel Becker, director of the advocacy group Safe Climate Campaign. Since none of the automakers has publicly split from the alliance, that makes them "complicit" in its actions to weaken environmental protections, he said.**

**"They want the alliance to say things that they don't want to say themselves so Ford and Toyota don't want to be held accountable for their extreme views; they want the alliance to do that," he said. "The whole purpose of the alliance is to shield the auto companies from the public."**

## **Automakers tout green credentials but fight climate rules**

**By: Scott Waldman**

As he announced that he would roll back a signature Obama administration climate initiative last month, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt stopped to smile and pose for a photo with some of the guests.

Prominent critics of mainstream climate science and representatives of automotive trade groups had gathered at EPA headquarters to hear Pruitt say he would dismantle President Obama's efforts to increase vehicle fuel economy standards.

"What an exciting day," Pruitt said. "We always like to have guests here at the EPA."

Mitch Bainwol, president of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, stood to Pruitt's left as the cameras flashed. His trade association had been a driving force in getting the Trump administration to revisit the fuel economy standards. Pruitt said the Obama administration's standards for 2022 to 2025 were "too high" and tweeted a picture with Bainwol and other auto trade group leaders.

Bainwol and the alliance, which represents major automobile manufacturers including Toyota Motor Corp., Ford Motor Co. and BMW Group, had fought hard since before the election for the policy Pruitt was now handing his members. The alliance sent a letter to President Trump the day after his election seeking a reduction in the fuel efficiency goals to which the industry had agreed under Obama and which Bainwol wrote were a "substantial challenge." It sent another to Pruitt just after his confirmation as EPA administrator. It submitted a document compiled by a fellow at the Heartland Institute that questioned basic climate science, including whether it was primarily driven by humanity, and that cited the work of researchers funded by the American Petroleum Institute. EPA cited the trade group's complaints in its justification for rolling back the rule.

The alliance's push to relax the fuel economy standards comes as many of its members are working to burnish their environmental images.

BMW wants to cut its CO2 emissions 50 percent by 2020. General Motors Co. wants to move to 100 percent renewable energy by 2050. Toyota has promised to cut carbon dioxide emissions completely from all of its vehicles by 2050. It has run ads that proclaim "Be Human, Respect Nature" as birds fly over its fleet of hybrid vehicles.

Some of the alliance's members, including Ford, have stated that they did not ask for a rollback of the rules.

Trade associations, lobbying groups and advocacy groups have long engaged in the types of controversial policy fights in Washington that their members don't want to have publicly associated with their business.

**The alliance's aggressive lobbying of the Trump administration and efforts to dispute climate science clearly played a significant role in EPA's efforts to undercut the regulations that would yield a major reduction in one of the primary sources of pollution in the country, said Daniel Becker, director of the advocacy group Safe Climate Campaign. Since none of the automakers has publicly split from the alliance, that makes them "complicit" in its actions to weaken environmental protections, he said.**

**"They want the alliance to say things that they don't want to say themselves so Ford and Toyota don't want to be held accountable for their extreme views; they want the alliance to do that," he said. "The whole purpose of the alliance is to shield the auto companies from the public."**

In addition to Toyota, the manufacturers that are part of the alliance include: BMW, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV, Ford, General Motors, Jaguar Land Rover Automotive PLC, Mazda Motor Corp., Mercedes-Benz, Mitsubishi Motors Corp., Porsche AG, Volkswagen Group of America and Volvo Car USA.

Transportation has surpassed electric generation to become the primary source of carbon dioxide pollution in the country. And with electric demand flattening in recent years, America's 250 million cars will be one of the nation's primary contributors to climate change for years to come. The Obama administration targeted those emissions, in an agreement reached with the automakers, to address the pollution challenge.

Obama's proposed rule would have required that average new cars get 36 mpg in 2025, up from 26 mpg in 2016. Now, if it doesn't take place, there will be a major increase in oil consumption, according to an analysis released by the Rhodium Group yesterday. Projected U.S. oil demand will increase by between 221,000 and 644,000 barrels per day by 2030, Rhodium found. That will lead to additional fuel costs for American drivers of \$193 billion to \$236 billion between now and 2035, depending on oil prices.

### **'We believe climate change is real'**

The fight over fuel economy standards escalated this week after 17 states and the District of Columbia filed suit against EPA over its rollback of the rule, which the states argued was "arbitrary and capricious" because it discarded years of research and public engagement.

That increased publicity, on top of the expected legal fight over Pruitt's rollback, which could last more than a year, may force automakers to choose whether they want to be associated with an unpopular strategy, said Joseph Goffman, a former senior Obama EPA official and current executive director of Harvard Law School's Environmental Law Program.

The companies may find that they can't afford to conduct business in a highly politicized environment, he said. Allowing their own trade group to push so hard against climate policies puts them in the middle of a political battle, whether they acknowledge it or not, that they might find they can't afford to fight, he added.

"They set this whole policy area up as a new target of opportunity for attack by the climate denialists and people who are anti-regulations ideologues, the interest of consumers and the environment and of the companies be damned," Goffman said. "It really seems to be as if the companies themselves are hostages on a roller coaster; it's being driven by people with an ideological agenda."

Royal Dutch Shell PLC famously dropped out of the American Legislative Exchange Council in 2015 because of the group's efforts attacking mainstream climate science. Exxon Mobil Corp. stopped funding the Heartland Institute after public pressure intensified due to concerns about that group's climate tactics. Other companies, including Apple Inc. and Nike Inc., backed away from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce for its strident opposition to climate policy in 2009.

Asked to comment for this story, the alliance pointed to an earlier statement touting the climate credentials of its members. Carbon reductions by the auto sector already approach the Paris Agreement goals for 2025, the group said.

"Automakers may well have done more than any other industry sector to reduce carbon emissions, because we believe climate change is real and we have a responsibility to reduce greenhouse gases," the group said in a statement.

A Toyota spokeswoman declined comment on whether the company disagreed with the alliance's tactics. Instead, she highlighted the company's lower-emissions vehicles.

"Toyota supports the goal of progressively stronger fuel economy standards and reduction in greenhouse gases, so that is an area where we are an industry leader in developing and deploying advanced power-trains, including plug-in hybrids [and] fuel cells, and those significantly reduce emissions or even admit zero greenhouse gases," she said. "We believe our innovations in these areas underscore our unwavering commitment to achieve this goal."

[Click here](#) to read the original article from E&E News.