



# REUTERS

**Dan Becker, director of the Safe Climate Campaign environmental group, said the administration’s move will “make America polluted again” and ultimately hurt American automakers by making them less competitive in a global market that is moving toward more efficiency.**

## **Trump administration bars California from requiring cleaner cars**

By David Shepardson  
September 19, 2019

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - President Donald Trump’s administration said on Thursday it is revoking California’s authority to set its own auto tailpipe emissions standards and require some zero-emission vehicles, a move certain to spark a legal battle between federal officials and the most populous state over the future of U.S. vehicles.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Andrew Wheeler said the decision will ensure nationwide rules that provide “much-needed regulatory certainty for the automotive industry.” Currently, California’s more stringent vehicle emissions rules are followed by a dozen other states that account for more than 40% of U.S. vehicle sales.

California, for decades given the authority by the federal government under presidents of both parties to establish its own emissions standards, responded with defiance.

The California Air Resources Board approved a resolution to allow the agency to pursue individual agreements with four automakers that in July agreed to voluntarily adopt emissions rules with California

that were stricter than those proposed by the Trump administration but less stringent than rules pursued under Democratic former President Barack Obama.

The Trump administration cited those agreements as part of its rationale to deny California a waiver to allow the state to implement its own emissions rules.

Revocation of the state's waiver authority will take effect 60 days after the formal publication of the action by the administration later this month. The move, which Trump had previewed on Wednesday, will have no immediate impact until the administration finalizes separate rules to weaken Obama-era emissions requirements through 2026, which Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao said would happen within weeks.

"No state has the authority to opt out of the nation's rules and no state has the right to impose its policies on everybody else in our whole country," Chao added.

The administration's action represents its latest step to weaken or reverse environmental protections and efforts to combat the effects of climate change since Trump took office in 2017. Vehicle tailpipe emissions represent a major source of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.

Dan Becker, director of the Safe Climate Campaign environmental group, said the administration's move will "make America polluted again" and ultimately hurt American automakers by making them less competitive in a global market that is moving toward more efficiency.

California officials have vowed to fight in court to preserve the state's standards in a battle that could eventually be decided by the U.S. Supreme Court. The Trump administration has been waging a multi-pronged battle to counter the state's efforts to fight climate change by reducing emissions of greenhouse gasses from vehicles.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler speaks during a press conference on the One National Program Rule on federal preemption of state fuel economy standards at EPA Headquarters in Washington, U.S., September 19, 2019. REUTERS/Sarah Silbiger  
Transportation Department General Counsel Steven Bradbury said the Trump administration hopes to get a quick legal ruling and is confident of its legal authority.

The Obama-era rules called for a fleetwide fuel efficiency average of 46.7 miles (75 km) per gallon by 2025, with average annual increases of about 5%, compared with 37 mpg (60 km per hour) by 2026 under the Trump administration's preferred option to freeze requirements.

In a joint statement with the EPA, the Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said it is affirming that federal law preempts state and local regulation of vehicle fuel economy.

'BACK IN ITS BOX'

The EPA said it is withdrawing a waiver under the Clean Air Act, the landmark federal law to combat air pollution, granted to California in January 2013 for its tailpipe greenhouse gas emissions and zero emission vehicle regulations.

“It’s time to put California’s waiver back in its box,” Wheeler said.

Wheeler said the push for electric vehicles is hurting the auto industry as most consumers do not want to buy those vehicles, which are more costly than gasoline-powered models. Wheeler said the administration’s revised standards will have a negligible impact on the environment.

California reached an agreement with four automakers in July to adopt emissions standards stricter than the ones Trump has proposed, but looser than Obama-era rules.

The administration subsequently launched an antitrust probe of the companies, an action that U.S. Senator Kamala Harris of California - a Democratic presidential candidate - asked a government watchdog to investigate.

The administration’s move marked the latest action by the Republican president targeting California, a Democratic bastion that has tangled with Trump on multiple fronts also including immigration.

One of those automakers, Ford Motor Co (F.N), did not say if it backs the waiver but reiterated its belief that “the best path forward is a negotiated settlement that offers a workable compromise. We need regulatory certainty, not litigation.”

On Wednesday, Trump said the planned move would help make vehicles cheaper and safer. He is counting on voters in truck-friendly heartland states to carry him to re-election in 2020.

The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, a trade group representing General Motors Co (GM.N), Toyota Motor Corp (7203.T), Volkswagen AG (VOWG\_p.DE), Ford and others, declined on Thursday to take a position on Trump’s revocation of California’s waiver. But the group reiterated the hope that a nationwide deal could be struck avoiding years of lawsuits.

The administration said Trump’s preferred option for emissions standards would hike U.S. oil consumption by about 500,000 barrels per day - about 2 to 3 percent of total daily consumption nationwide - by the 2030s but reduce automakers regulatory costs by more than \$300 billion.

Direct link: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-autos-emissions-trump/trump-administration-bars-california-from-requiring-cleaner-cars-idUSKBN1W4157>