

## Fact check: Trump says his pollution rules will make cars safer and cheaper. Will they?

BY [DALE KASLER](#) AND [HANNAH WILEY](#)

SEPTEMBER 18, 2019

President Donald Trump appealed to Americans' wallets — and fears of dying behind the wheel — when he announced Wednesday he was [revoking California's legal authority](#) to impose stricter air-pollution regulations on cars.

California officials, environmentalists and transportation experts said Trump has got it all wrong.

Trump's justification for rolling back [California's pollution standards](#), spelled out in a series of tweets, boiled down to this: California's rules will make cars much more expensive. Because of that, motorists will hang onto their old clunkers longer, putting themselves at greater risk of an accident.

His plan, he said on Twitter, will allow automakers “to produce far less expensive cars for the consumer, while at the same time making the cars substantially SAFER.”

Trump's critics, though, say his argument relies on distorted data .While it's true that the California plan will make cars more expensive, and older cars are generally less safe, the critics say Trump is grossly exaggerating the increase in sticker prices. What's more, they say Trump is ignoring the huge cost savings that will result from a new generation of fuel-efficient vehicles.

The Trump Administration is revoking California's Federal Waiver on emissions in order to produce far less expensive cars for the consumer, while at the same time making the cars substantially SAFER. This will lead to more production because of this pricing and safety.....

“The cost of fuel will offset any cost associated with improving technology,” Gov. Gavin Newsom told reporters as he, Attorney General Xavier Becerra and Chairwoman Mary Nichols of the California Air Resources Board promised to sue the Trump administration.

How much of an offset? In documents released about a year ago, the Trump administration said vehicle prices will jump an average of \$1,850.

Yet Daniel Sperling, a UC Davis transportation expert and board member of the Air Resources Board, said the actual difference is “a few hundred dollars.”

“The effect is very small,” Sperling said. As a result, he said the president is wrong to assert that motorists’ safety will be compromised under California plan.

And the fuel savings will be considerably greater. Margo Oge, a former U.S. Environmental Protection Agency official who works for an advocacy group called the Environmental Protection Network, said the more fuel-efficient cars called for in the California plan would save motorists as much as \$5,000 over the life of the vehicles.

**Trump’s plan is “worse for your pocketbook,” said Daniel Becker of the Safe Climate Campaign, a Washington environmental group that focuses on transportation issues.**

However, auto industry analyst George Peterson said the president has a point. California’s rules “make a new car much more unaffordable to the people who can least afford (to pay more),” said Peterson, president of market consultant AutoPacific Inc. in Tustin. “This isn’t something the general population is crying for — this is something California wants.”

California and Trump are sparring over the federal Clean Air Act and limits on greenhouse gases. The federal law, signed by President Richard Nixon in 1970, gives California the ability to establish stricter guidelines than the U.S. government as long as the federal EPA grants a waiver. President Barack Obama granted a waiver on greenhouse gases from cars, although the state and federal government developed a joint plan to slash carbon emissions by about 30 percent by 2025.

Because producing lighter cars is the most effective way of curbing carbon, the original Obama plan would hike fuel economy from about 35 mpg to 50 mpg.

After Trump signaled in 2017 he would roll back those standards, Newsom’s administration cut a compromise deal with four major automakers in July: Volkswagen, Ford, BMW and Honda. The compromise, among other things, gives those carmakers an additional year — to 2026 — to meet the mandates spelled out during the Obama administration.

Furious at California — which has resisted him on a wide range of issues — the president is now revoking the state’s Clean Air Act waiver.

In his tweets, he warned automakers against joining with California and said his plan will lead to more cars being produced. “Automakers should seize this opportunity because without this alternative to California, you will be out of business,” he said.

But Oge, of the Environmental Protection Network, said Trump’s actions are undermining automakers’ ability to plan future models and production. “It will affect the car companies, their competitiveness, the uncertainty of designing a car over the next few years,” said Oge, a former director of the EPA’s EPA Office of Transportation and Air Quality. “The companies are going to have to wait two or three years to figure out what to do while (the dispute) goes through the legal process.”

Trump also said there “will be very little difference in emissions” between his plan and California’s.

But under the plan rolled out by the Trump administration, fuel mileage would rise only slightly — to 37 mpg. Under the California plan, carmakers have to achieve average fuel mileage of 50 mpg by 2026.

Direct link: <https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/environment/article235219252.html>

