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Trump set to gut mileage standards, an attack on electric cars

[Bradley Berman](#)

- Mar. 30th 2020 5:22 pm ET

The Trump administration plans to release a final rule Tuesday on vehicle mileage standards through 2026. Trump is expected to reverse Obama-era efficiency standards, gutting one of the country's most significant measures to combat climate change and the public-health impacts from tailpipe emissions. The implications for the electric-vehicle market could be experienced for several years.

With the world focused on the outbreak of coronavirus, Trump's cabinet is expected to reduce the efficiency increases from about 5% through 2026 to about 1.5%. The step will fulfill long-stated Trump goals to undercut Obama-era standards that practically ensured a massive shift to EVs in the US.

In September, the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration (NHTSA) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) struck its first blow to fuel efficiency by prohibiting states, notably California, from issuing their own fuel standards. That step was supported by General Motors, Toyota, and Fiat-Chrysler.

In an Orwellian statement, GM told *Electrek* that its [opposition to California emissions rules would speed up the shift to EVs](#).

Trump and automakers make the bogus claim that lower fuel-efficiency standards will reduce consumer costs and make on-road vehicles safer. Car prices have steadily climbed since 2012, but because buyers opted for bigger, more powerful, and luxurious cars and trucks. Electric cars provide a lower cost of ownership compared to ICE vehicles.

The second blow of the one-two punch is expected to land tomorrow when Trump loosens the established annual benchmark targets for fuel efficiency for model years 2021 to 2026. The Obama-era standards would have required automakers to increase fleet-wide fuel economy by about 5% annually until reaching a goal of 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025. (Real-world efficiency mileage would be closer to 40 miles per gallon, less than half of what EVs commonly offer.)

Under the Obama administration's rules, automakers face steep fines for falling short of the standard for each model year.

Environmentalists and EV advocates were swift to condemn the Trump Administration for the anticipated move.

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David Friedman, vice president of advocacy at *Consumer Reports*, commented:

At a time when many Americans are going without a paycheck, it's unconscionable to approve a plan that will have consumers paying more for gas for years to come. The rollback of these consumer protections was a bad idea when it was proposed two years ago. Finalizing it now, as we are on the brink of a recession, ignores the long-term financial hardships this moment will have on millions of Americans.

Electrek's Take

Well, this was not unanticipated. But seeing it come to pass is no less shocking.

The Obama-era rules on fuel efficiency, along with California's ZEV mandates, are the pillars of environmental legislation regarding vehicle efficiency and emissions.

President Trump's attacks on these laws — fundamental guidelines for mitigating climate change and protecting air quality — are egregious. Once undone, the laws will not easily be restored.

Nonetheless, Trump's latest affronts to clean-air rules and electric vehicles serve as a call to action for a change of leadership in November.

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