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Becker also called on EPA to get rid of the regulation’s “loopholes.”

He took aim at “off-cycle credits,” which give car manufacturers credit even if they don’t actually reduce emissions. One example is solar panels on car rooftops, which don’t achieve many carbon reductions because people who can afford them generally park in garages, Becker said.

For Becker, “It’s a big enough [loophole] to drive a truck through.”

The next rule, Becker noted, needs to be finalized by spring of 2024 — at least six months before the end of Biden’s first term — to insulate it from being susceptible of the Congressional Review Act. The law allows the White House and Congress to repeal regulations finalized at the end of an administration. In practice, it only works when there’s a new party in power. Trump and the GOP used it a whopping 16 times in 2017.

Greens agree that EPA's car rules stop short

BY: KELSEY BRUGGER

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Environmentalists yesterday applauded EPA’s new clean car rule, but one point underpinned their praise: More needs to be done.

They lauded the agency for finalizing a vehicle emissions standard through model year 2026 that is stronger than what EPA proposed over the summer. But environmentalists stressed this is just the first step.

“Even the [environmental groups] that didn’t want to say, ‘This sucks,’ didn’t want to say, ‘Relax your efforts,’” said Dan Becker, director of Safe Climate Transport Campaign at the Center for Biological Diversity. “The world is at stake.”

Greens urged the administration to quickly focus on the next generation of standards for model year 2027, setting the U.S. on track to zero-emissions vehicles.

EPA Administrator Michael Regan yesterday suggested the agency is already working on just that. But how quickly, or boldly, the agency will move under the remainder of President Biden’s first term remains to be seen.

The new standard for cars and light trucks, covering model years 2023 to 2026, knocks out former President Trump’s rollback of Obama-era rules. It's expected to achieve roughly a 28 percent decrease in greenhouse gas emissions. By contrast, the Trump rule would have equated to a 6 percent reduction over the same time period.

The Union of Concerned Scientists estimates that the new plan will reduce emissions by as much as 440 million metric tons over the lifetime of vehicles sold through 2026, an improvement of about 26 percent over EPA's proposed rule in August ([Greenwire](#), Dec. 20).

But activists say more needs to be done.

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Dave Cooke at UCS noted that the new rule reins in some perks for manufactures, including by narrowing extra credits to just a two-year window, from 2023 to 2024.

But he said EPA needs to go beyond minor tweaks and consider overhauling the program entirely.

For one thing, the agency should review existing standards for larger vehicles as SUV sales continue to climb every year, he said. While vehicles have gotten more fuel-efficient, they've also gotten bigger.

“EPA must consider how the design of its standards can be improved to maximize fuel efficiency (and reduce emissions) of the total new light-duty vehicle fleet,” Cooke wrote in an email. “One of the most obvious starting points is to start treating cars and SUVs equivalently.”

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Meanwhile, the Transportation Department is working on a rule for model years 2024 to 2026, which is set to be released next spring, Cooke said. Previously, EPA and DOT had worked on a joint rulemaking, but a DOT statutory requirement of an 18-month lead time meant the agency could not finalize a rule for model year 2023.

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