

## We Can't Let Up on the Pedal in the Drive for Electric Vehicles | Opinion

By Dan Becker and Maya Golden-Krasner

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Following the [hottest](#) year on record, the fight for clean cars and a healthier planet is facing determined foes. Now it looks like the Biden administration may [slow-roll](#) the needed transition to clean vehicles, knuckling under to craven automakers, oil companies, and car dealers.

These powerful industries are teaming up to run a proposed Environmental Protection Agency rule off the road, and with it our best measure to keep the climate crisis from careening off the rails.

It's not just the climate at stake. An American Lung Association [study](#) just found that a wholesale switch to EVs and non-combustion electric power would save the lives of hundreds of infants and prevent millions of asthma attacks over coming decades.

The EPA projected that under its proposed standard, due out this spring, up to [67 percent of new cars](#) sold in 2032 would be zero-emissions. That would slash greenhouse gases that cause climate change and reduce soot and smog pollution that [worsen](#) cardiovascular disease and lung diseases like asthma.

Weakening the rule would encourage auto companies, which have been stalling on making EVs, to sell more gas-guzzling, pollution-spewing [SUVs and pickups](#)—on which they make [fat profits](#)—for a longer period of time.

The administration should side with consumers and the climate, not polluters.

One of the top arguments advanced by opponents is that consumers really don't want EVs since the rate of increase of EV sales has slowed. But [record-breaking sales numbers show](#) that consumers do want them.

In California, EVs were top sellers last year—25 percent of car sales—up from 19 percent in 2022. Even if growth slows, EVs are still selling at breakneck speed.

Nationwide EV sales rose 47 percent last year, according to [Bloomberg](#).

While it's true that there has been a little decline, what businessperson would not be jealous of a slowdown to an expected 32 percent sales increase in 2024?

Adding chutzpah to injury, however, a large group of auto dealers claiming to be the "[voice of the customer](#)"—in other words, us—wrote to President Biden, telling him to "hit the brakes" on EVs.

The cabal of retrograde automakers, drill-happy oil companies and car dealers reviled for their hidden fees and shady lending want the White House to forget calling global warming an "existential threat."

Auto dealers don't like EVs. Most don't make their money selling vehicles, but profit from selling repairs and maintenance.

EVs work. Because they have fewer moving parts than gasoline-powered vehicles, they seldom need repairs and require [little maintenance](#). Many EVs are already [cheaper](#) to buy and run than their gas-powered doppelclunkers. If car dealers truly spoke for their customers, they would endorse EVs as the real deal.

Automakers haven't learned their lesson after watching Japanese companies grab a quarter of their market in the 1970s and 1980s when Detroit specialized in lemons. Instead of getting behind innovative vehicles, U.S. companies seem determined to sell gas guzzlers that increase pollution and oil use and force consumers to shell out money at the pump.

Last year, BYD—a Chinese carmaker most Americans have never heard of—sold 3 million EVs and plug-in hybrids. If the U.S. Big Three fail to make EVs, China will be happy to export them

to us and import our jobs and profits. By the way, BYD just announced plans to open [a Mexican EV plant to supply the U.S.](#)

Oil-based industries are stuck in reverse, manufacturing, selling and fueling gas-guzzling pickups and SUVs that mostly haul lattes home from [Starbucks](#).

And while the sky is not falling on EV sales, our climate is more precarious than ever.

A [record number](#) of climate disasters last year, many costing more than \$1 billion, [forced](#) an estimated 2.5 million Americans from their homes. Climate change is [accelerating at a faster pace](#) than previously thought.

The [biggest single step](#) we can take to tackle global warming is slashing auto pollution. Now is precisely the time for the president to accelerate, not stymie, progress on cleaner cars.

President Biden must act boldly to adopt the strongest possible clean car standards. Like a savvy car customer, he should ignore industry lies. He should strengthen the clean car rule to force the auto industry to make and sell the clean vehicles the country needs to fight the climate crisis.

*Dan Becker is director of the [Center for Biological Diversity's Safe Climate Transport Campaign](#).*

*Maya Golden-Krasner is the deputy director of the Center's Climate Law Institute.*

*The views expressed in this article are the writers' own.*

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