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Biden brings on the clean cars

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By Arianna Skibell
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The Biden administration’s new climate rule for cars and trucks could make a serious dent in the nation’s planet-warming pollution — if it survives.

Under the Environmental Protection Agency’s [final clean car rule released today](#), electric vehicles could dominate new auto sales by 2032, slashing vehicles’ climate pollution in half.

The rule — one of [four significant transportation](#) policies expected in the coming weeks — is the strictest federal climate regulation ever issued for passenger cars and trucks. And Republican opponents [are already plotting its demise](#) ahead of the presidential election.

“This rule is delusional,” Republican Sens. Dan Sullivan of Alaska and Pete Ricketts of Nebraska said in a statement. The duo said it would work to pass legislation nullifying the measure.

While most environmental groups have embraced the rule, some expressed frustration with the compromises the administration made in the final policy. The rule offers automakers a more gradual on-ramp for curbing pollution than EPA had first proposed last year. It also provides more flexibility for manufacturers to comply with the new pollution limits, allowing more plug-in hybrid models and more efficient internal combustion engines to share the showroom with fully electric vehicles.

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In a more glowing vein, former EPA official Margo Oge called the rule the “single most important climate regulation in the history of the country” during a call organized by the Environmental Defense Fund.

The rule’s iteration is a test of President Joe Biden’s ability to enact his climate agenda while balancing demands from voters, including young climate activists pushing for aggressive action and unionized auto workers in states like Michigan anxious about their jobs surviving the transition to EVs.

The peace offering to the auto industry might also dissuade companies from suing, helping to insulate the rule from legal attacks — a venue Republican opponents are already eyeing to overturn the measure. The oil and gas industry has also threatened to sue, with the American Petroleum Institute asserting that the rule will “make new gas-powered vehicles unavailable.”

Despite the revisions, the rule aims to cut roughly the same amount of carbon dioxide emissions from passenger vehicles as in EPA’s initial proposal. Altogether, the agency says, the measure would curb 7.1 billion tons of planet-warming pollution by 2055, compared with 7.3 billion tons in the original plan.

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