



**"By revoking this key scientific finding our government is putting fealty to Big Oil over sound science and people's health," Dan Becker, director of the Center for Biological Diversity's Safe Climate Transport Campaign wrote in a statement. "These proposals are a giant gift to oil companies that will do real damage to people, wildlife and future generations."**

## **Trump's EPA now says greenhouse gases don't endanger people**

By Jeff Brady  
24 July 2025

The Trump administration wants to overturn a key [2009 Environmental Protection Agency finding](#) that underpins much of the federal government's actions to rein in climate change.

The EPA has crafted a proposal that would undo the government's "endangerment finding," a determination that pollutants from burning fossil fuels, such as carbon dioxide and methane, can be regulated under the Clean Air Act. The finding has long served as the foundation for a host of policies and rules to address climate change. The EPA's proposal to revoke the finding is currently under review by the White House Office of Management and Budget.

Already, environmentalists, climate advocates and others are bracing for what could be a fundamental shift away from trying to address the problem of a hotter climate. And the Trump administration is celebrating the proposal as a potential economic win.

"Today is the greatest day of deregulation our nation has seen," EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin said in [announcing the proposal](#) in March. "We are driving a dagger straight into the heart of the climate change religion to drive down cost of living for American families, unleash American energy, bring auto jobs back to the U.S. and more."

The administration's effort comes in the wake of the [hottest year](#) humans have ever recorded on Earth, [climate-fueled wildfires](#) that destroyed thousands of homes in Los Angeles and hotter ocean temperatures that [made Hurricane Helene stronger](#) and more likely to cause damage inland.

The move could still be overturned by courts. But if the decision is upheld, it would speed President Trump's efforts to end former President Biden's ambitious climate agenda and make it more difficult for future administrations to limit the human-caused greenhouse gas pollution that's heating the planet.

## REPEALING A CORNERSTONE OF U.S. CLIMATE ACTION

On the first day of his second term, Trump signed an executive order [asking the EPA administrator to submit recommendations](#) "on the legality and continuing applicability" of the [EPA's endangerment finding](#).

In 2007, the [Supreme Court found in \*Massachusetts v. EPA\*](#) that the agency is required to regulate carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions under the Clean Air Act. Then, in 2009 during the Obama administration, the EPA [declared greenhouse gases in the atmosphere were a hazard to people](#).

"This long-overdue finding cements 2009's place in history as the year when the United States Government began seriously addressing the challenge of greenhouse gas pollution and seizing the opportunity of clean-energy reform," then-EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson said [in announcing the decision](#).

The endangerment finding is the basis for rules regulating climate pollution from [coal and gas-fired power plants](#), [car and truck exhaust](#) and [methane from the oil and gas industry](#).

"The Trump administration's intent is clear: They want to undermine or overturn the endangerment finding so as to evade EPA's legal responsibility to address the harms caused by climate change," says Rachel Cleetus, policy director with the Climate and Energy Program at the Union of Concerned Scientists. "This is simply a giveaway to the fossil fuel industry and an attempt to undo pollution standards to limit heat-trapping emissions from motor vehicles, from power plants, [and] from oil and gas operations."

The EPA has repeatedly reaffirmed the 2009 endangerment finding. In 2022, Congress included language in the climate-focused Inflation Reduction Act that labels greenhouse gases as pollutants under the Clean Air Act. That makes abandoning the finding more difficult.

But if the administration succeeds, that would make it easier to accomplish President Trump's other priorities, such as eliminating greenhouse gas limits on coal and gas power plants.

In June, the Trump administration announced plans to repeal all limits on greenhouse gas emissions from [fossil fuel-fired power plants](#). In proposing the change, the EPA argues that pollution from U.S. power plants is a small part of global emissions and is declining. The agency claims eliminating climate pollution from these facilities would have little effect on people's health.

## WHAT THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION IS ARGUING NOW

On Jan. 20, Trump [declared a "national energy emergency"](#) and signed his [Unleashing American Energy executive order](#). These contribute to the president's broader push to redirect the federal government away from former President Joe Biden's climate agenda and [toward an even deeper embrace of fossil fuels](#).

Trump wrote in his order that the goal is to "restore American prosperity" and, as he said in his inauguration speech, "We will drill, baby, drill."

The [Trump administration argues](#) that the EPA, under then-President Barack Obama, established the endangerment finding in "a flawed and unorthodox way" and "did not stick to the letter of the Clean Air Act."

In seeking to reverse the endangerment finding, the Trump EPA is [making a legal argument](#) that previous administrators overstepped their legal authority and "imposed trillions of dollars of costs on Americans." The agency repeats past Republican arguments that the 2007 *Massachusetts v. EPA* decision "explicitly did not hold that EPA was required to regulate these emissions from these sources." And the EPA argues that more recent Supreme Court decisions raise further questions about the legality of the 2009 endangerment finding.

Environmental groups instead see a proposal designed to benefit fossil fuel companies, who Trump courted during the campaign.

**"By revoking this key scientific finding our government is putting fealty to Big Oil over sound science and people's health," Dan Becker, director of the Center for Biological Diversity's Safe Climate Transport Campaign wrote in a statement. "These proposals are a giant gift to oil companies that will do real damage to people, wildlife and future generations."**

In 2024, Trump [suggested oil executives should raise \\$1 billion for his presidential bid](#) because he would roll back environmental rules.

## A LONG LEGAL BATTLE IS AHEAD

Critics who cast doubt on the scientific consensus behind climate change see an opportunity to eliminate a decision they have long opposed.

"Since the 2009 endangerment finding, the EPA has been trying to regulate greenhouse gases and as a result trying to control large portions of the economy," Daren Bakst, director of the Center for Energy and Environment at the Competitive Enterprise Institute, which advocates for regulatory reform on various policy issues, wrote in an email to NPR. He specifically points to rules limiting climate pollution from power plants and from cars and trucks.

Bakst calls the potential harms in the 2009 endangerment finding "speculative at best" and echoes an argument many conservatives make, saying, "Even if the United States eliminated all of its greenhouse gas emissions, it would have little to no measurable effect on global temperatures."

The U.S. is the largest historical emitter of man-made climate pollution and, under the Paris climate agreement, has agreed to contribute to the global effort to reduce emissions and limit warming. Trump has signed a directive to have the U.S. withdraw from that agreement.

If the EPA finds the 2009 endangerment finding is no longer applicable, Bakst says that "would preclude future greenhouse gas regulations." And he says "it should be easy to repeal existing rules that are predicated on the 2009 finding."

But that could still be years from now. There will be a public comment period, rulemaking processes and legal challenges the Trump administration would have to overcome first.

<https://www.npr.org/2025/07/24/nx-s1-5302162/climate-change-trump-epa>