

EPA climate rollback threatens California clean air protections

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The Environmental Protection Agency will rescind the long-standing finding that greenhouse gas emissions endanger human health, as well [as tailpipe emission standards for vehicles](#), setting off what it describes as the largest deregulatory action in U.S. history.

Republican President Donald Trump's pick to run the EPA Lee Zeldin announced the agency's plan to rescind the "endangerment finding" on the Ruthless podcast on Tuesday, saying it will save Americans money and unravel two decades of regulation aimed at reducing carbon dioxide, methane and other greenhouse gases from cars, power plants, oil production and other sources.

In 2009, the EPA under former Democratic President Barack Obama issued [a finding](#) that emissions from new motor vehicles contribute to pollution and endanger public health and welfare. It was upheld in several legal challenges and underpinned subsequent greenhouse gas regulations.

"With regard to the endangerment finding, they'll say carbon dioxide is a pollutant and that's the end of it. They'll never acknowledge any type of benefit or need for carbon dioxide," Zeldin told the podcast. "It's important to note, and they don't, how important it is for the planet."

Here's what to know about the rescinding of the finding that greenhouse gas emissions and what it might mean for California.

What is the EPA's endangerment finding and why does it matter?

Reuters reported last week that the EPA plans to repeal all greenhouse gas emission standards for light-duty, medium-duty, and heavy-duty vehicles and engines in the coming days after it removes the scientific finding that justified those rules, according to a summary.

It is also expected to justify rescinding the endangerment finding by casting doubt on the scientific record used to make the finding, saying that "developments cast significant doubt on the reliability of the findings," the summary seen by Reuters says.

The U.S. Supreme Court, in its landmark Massachusetts v. EPA case in 2007, said the EPA has authority under the Clean Air Act to regulate greenhouse gas emissions and required the agency to make a scientific finding on whether they endanger public health.

If finalized, this action will devastate the EPA's ability to carry out its primary authority to limit climate pollution under the federal Clean Air Act.

How could the EPA's climate rollback impact California's clean air goals?

The Environmental Protection Agency's rescission of the greenhouse gas finding could weaken California's position in setting stricter air pollution regulations because the underpinning of those state rules is the Clean Air Act, which regulates greenhouse gas emissions.

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Could California sue the EPA over greenhouse gas deregulation?

California has previously sued the EPA over greenhouse gas regulations, so state officials will likely sue over the EPA's latest move. In 2004, California and Massachusetts sued the then-Bush Administration's policy that the EPA had no power under the federal Clean Air Act to regulate greenhouse gas pollution. In 2007, the Supreme Court ruled that greenhouse gases are "air pollutants" under the Clean Air Act.

California has either filed or joined with other states to sue the Trump Administration more than 30 times during Trump's second term. The state filed 123 lawsuits against the first Trump administration, prevailing in two-thirds of them, according to [CalMatters](#).

What are California politicians saying about the EPA's climate reversal

Gov. Gavin Newsom called the EPA's climate reversal an "idiotic" move in a post on X.

Newsom, who co-chairs the U.S. Climate Alliance with Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers, later issued a joint statement denouncing the federal actions. "Americans deserve the truth from their federal government about the climate crisis," the governors said. "No amount of burying research or firing scientists will

change the facts: Greenhouse gas pollution causes climate change and endangers our health and welfare — period.”

What environmental groups are saying about the EPA’s climate reversal

Environmental activists immediately condemned the announcement.

“As if any doubt remained, the Trump Administration has formalized climate denial as the official policy of the United States government,” [Sierra Club Acting Executive Director Loren Blackford](#) said in a statement. “If approved, rescinding the endangerment finding would strike a decisive blow to the EPA’s authority to limit deadly greenhouse gas emissions and protect our people and our planet from the very worst of the climate crisis. Nearly every single day we see increased incidents of extreme weather, record heatwaves, deadly floods and droughts all threatening our lives and communities—all of which are the undeniable result of greenhouse gas emissions.

“The Trump administration is again taking a sledgehammer to the very foundation of our government and settled law, and doing so only to the benefit of corporate polluters while we pay the price.”

Zeldin said he will make the formal announcement on Tuesday afternoon in Indiana.

What do supporters say about the EPA’s climate reversal move?

U.S. Secretary of Energy Chris Wright praised the move as a return to practical policy:

“Today’s announcement is a monumental step toward returning to commonsense policies that expand access to affordable, reliable, secure energy and improve quality of life for all Americans,” Wright said. “Thanks to President Trump’s leadership, America is returning to free and open dialogue around climate and energy policy — driving the focus back to following the data.”

[The Indiana Motor Truck Association](#) supported the rollback, saying the move would reduce regulatory burdens and restore consumer choice. The association was present at the announcement event in Indiana, signaling industry endorsement for the proposal.

<https://www.desertsun.com/story/news/nation/california/2025/07/29/epa-greenhouse-gas-rollback-california-response/85427828007/>