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Although car manufacturers plan their models years ahead, the rollback could mean that eventually they won’t feel pressure to innovate or make their cars more fuel-efficient, Becker said.

Whether carmakers will continue to comply with fuel economy standards is yet to be determined, but Becker points to history.

After fuel standards were initially set, they stayed [about the same](#) for about two decades, and [emissions](#) didn’t improve further until they were raised during the Obama administration.

“The auto companies, without the rules, failed to improve the efficiency of their vehicles,” Becker said.

The U.S. won't enforce car fuel efficiency rules. That could cost you money.

By Ignacio Calderon
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In July, President [Donald Trump](#)’s signature bill eliminated the penalties carmakers would have had to pay for not meeting fuel economy requirements.

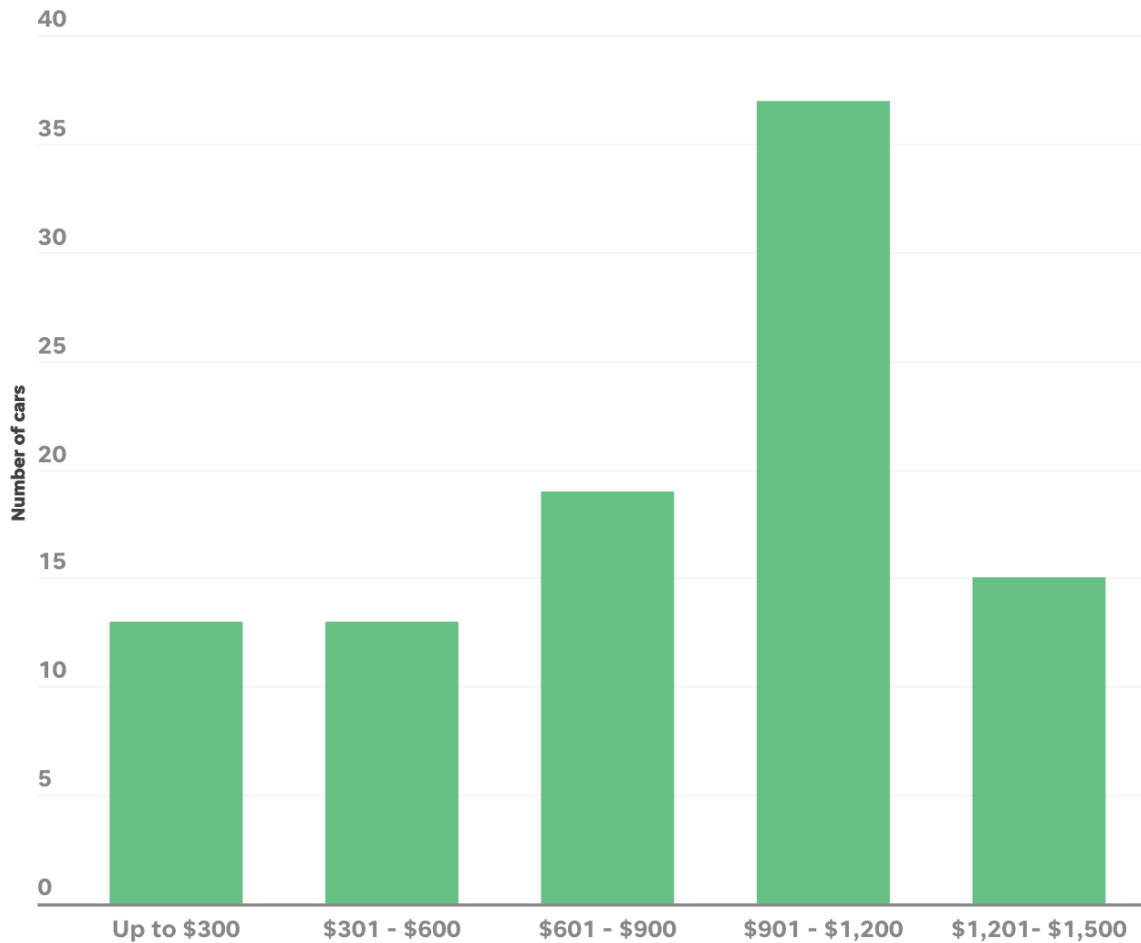
The [car industry](#) applauded the move, which, federal data shows, has cost manufacturers more than \$1 billion in fines over the past decade.

Though the fuel efficiency rules are still on the books for now, experts say taking away the fines can remove incentives to make cars use fewer gallons for more miles.

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Eliminating fuel economy fines could cost drivers hundreds of dollars

For the 100 most popular cars, eliminating fuel economy penalties could erase fuel savings of up to \$1,500, with most cars losing between \$900 and \$1,200, according to USA TODAY estimates



SOURCE: USA TODAY analysis of federal data based on 15,000 miles driven and current gas prices. The savings were estimated by comparing fuel costs from current fuel economy for each model against the required levels for 2031 set by the Biden administration.

But what does that mean for you?

To illustrate the impact fuel economy rules could have on how much you pay at the gas station, USA TODAY compiled data for nearly 100 of the most popular cars by sales in the country.

For example, driving the most efficient 2025 Ford F-150 for 15,000 miles costs about \$2,000 today.

That cost would be cut nearly in half if Ford retrofitted the truck to meet federal efficiency standards it was required to follow by 2031.

That conclusion is based on the miles-per-gallon rating of this car now compared with what it's required to have in a few years.

Using the same method across all the popular car models, potential saving estimated by USA TODAY ranged from \$53 to \$1,432, with most cars saving between \$900 and \$1,200, if the requirements were met. The analysis included passenger cars, SUVs, minivans and pickups.

For a more detailed breakdown, you can search for your car here:

Potential fuel savings by car model

Removing fuel economy penalties could erase fuel savings for the 100 most popular cars, with most losing between \$900 and \$1,200, according to USA TODAY estimates

– (SEE ARTICLE TO SEARCH) –

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K. Venkatesh Prasad, senior vice president of research and chief innovation officer at the Center for Automotive Research, said there could be a slowdown in mileage improvements without regulatory demand, but the industry thinks on a global scale.

“Avoiding local (say, U.S.) cost given relaxed local regulations would hurt global sales or add new cost to sales of the US-designed products in other markets (China and Europe) so car makers and equally importantly the major suppliers would all invest to be ready for all major markets,” Prasad said in an emailed statement.

Last year, the Biden administration [said](#) its fuel efficiency standards for 2027 through 2031 would save Americans more than \$23 billion.

Though the system is imperfect, experts say, the fuel efficiency requirements work, not only for drivers but also for the environment.

David Greene, a research professor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, cowrote a [study](#) that estimated the near-doubling of fuel economy from 1975 to 2018 saved 2 trillion gallons of gasoline and 17 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide.

Beyond the removal of fines, the broader fuel economy requirements set by the Biden administration are also being reviewed, a National Highway Transportation Safety Administration agency spokesperson told USA TODAY in a statement.

Asked whether it still projects that drivers will save \$23 billion in fuel costs in the coming years, the agency said: “We look forward to sharing the updated assessment of costs and benefits as part of the rulemaking process. Once the updated standards are completed, the agency will continue to track and notify companies when they are out of compliance.”

The agency pointed to the projected increase in costs for new cars from the standards in place.

Its [analysis](#) last year showed that while regulatory costs would add a few hundred dollars to car prices, that increase eventually would be offset by fuel savings.

The removal of penalties is part of a larger trend to undo regulations around the fossil fuel industry.

Recently, the Environmental Protection Agency proposed to roll back greenhouse gas emissions standards for cars. These two standards work together: The less fuel a car needs, the lower its emissions.

Greene, a former adviser for the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, acknowledges that the emissions standards were ambitious but said removing them could hamper efforts to fight climate change.

“That’s a huge blow to the U.S. efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to mitigate the damaging effects of climate change, which we see just about every day now,” Greene said.

Transportation, which also includes ships, trains and planes, is the largest sector emitting climate-warming gases, [according to the EPA](#).

When EPA administrator Lee Zeldin announced the car greenhouse gas emissions repeal, he touted the more affordable prices and regulatory relief.

The agency's own draft assessment, however, showed that the move could cost the economy hundreds of billions of dollars, [USA TODAY reported](#).

The Biden EPA rule would have increased costs of new cars – \$900 for a sedan to \$2,600 for an SUV, according to the [projections](#) announced at the time. But in the long run, cheaper maintenance and fuel savings would have offset those initial costs, with estimates showing sedan and SUV drivers would save \$4,400 over the lifetime of the vehicle.

Incentives to switch to electric cars, which would have added to the savings, also are vanishing. For example, people who buy new electric cars no longer get [\\$7,500 in federal tax credits](#). The Trump administration also pulled the plug on a Biden administration initiative to grow the network of [electric vehicle chargers](#).

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Our methodology

USA TODAY based its analysis on the 100 most popular cars in the country. We looked up each model on a federal database to find its miles-per-gallon rating for 2025 models, or the latest available for some recently discontinued models. Each model has various trims (like 2WD or 4WD) with different fuel economy. We used

the most efficient trim, excluding EVs and plug-in electric hybrids, to lean on a conservative estimate.

We compared costs under that current fuel economy against the required economy for 2031, using current fuel prices from the Energy and Information Administration.

Some caveats: The fuel economy ratings for today's cars are taken under ideal lab conditions. Real-world fuel efficiency tends to be lower than lab ratings. The government-required levels also don't mean that every car meets or will meet them. These apply as a fleet average, weighted by sales, to car manufacturers.

Potential fuel savings from an alternative method that David Greene showed USA TODAY projected smaller savings, but still in the hundreds of dollars. This method calculated a fractional reduction in fuel consumption based on current and future fuel economy requirements.

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ost-savings/85727104007/)