

The INDEPENDENT

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Trump set to dismantle US climate rules in ‘betrayal’ of global goals

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Donald Trump’s Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is set to dismantle the legal foundation of US climate regulation, which campaigners have labelled a “betrayal” of poorer nations and global goals to combat the climate crisis.

The EPA is set to rescind the 2009 “endangerment finding” – the scientific determination that greenhouse gases endanger public health and welfare.

The finding underpins nearly all federal limits on planet-heating emissions under the Clean Air Act, including vehicle pollution standards, methane rules and restrictions on emissions from power plants and industrial facilities. Without the finding, the agency’s authority to regulate carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases would be severely constrained.

The White House has described the move as “the largest deregulatory action in American history”.

Press secretary Karoline Leavitt said the repeal, which is due to be released on Thursday, would eliminate “\$1.3 trillion in crushing regulations”. EPA press secretary Brigit Hirsch claimed the Barack Obama-era rule “one of the most damaging decisions in modern history” and said the agency “is actively working to deliver a historic action for the American people.”

The endangerment finding followed the Supreme Court’s 2007 ruling in *Massachusetts v EPA*, which determined that greenhouse gases qualify as air pollutants under the Clean Air Act and that the agency must regulate them if they are found to endanger public health or welfare. Since the finding was issued in 2009, federal courts have repeatedly upheld it against legal challenges.

After the EPA proposed repealing it last year, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine reassessed the scientific basis and concluded the original determination was “accurate, has stood the test of time, and is now reinforced by even stronger evidence.”

The panel added: “The evidence for current and future harm to human health and welfare created by human-caused greenhouse gases is beyond scientific dispute.”

Vehicle standards finalised in 2024 were built on the finding and aimed to cut passenger vehicle tailpipe emissions by nearly 50 per cent by 2032 compared with projected 2027 levels. The EPA previously said those standards would deliver net benefits of \$99bn annually through 2055, including lower fuel and maintenance costs for drivers.

Harjeet Singh, climate activist and strategic advisor to the Fossil Fuel Treaty Initiative, told *The Independent* the rollback would have consequences far beyond US borders.

“This betrayal doesn't just doom its own citizens, it also condemns millions in developing nations who contribute the least to this crisis yet will suffer the most from the supercharged storms and droughts,” he said.

Toneyhn Verkitus, Executive Director, Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania said: “The rescission of the Endangerment Finding is a government-sanctioned crime against public health and the environment. The current administration’s rejection of overwhelming, science-based evidence signals a profound disregard for the wellbeing of our planet and a clear prioritisation of corporate interests over human life. Without these protections, our fundamental right to clean air and clean water is sacrificed at the altar of greed.”

The United States is the world’s largest historical emitter of greenhouse gases and remains the second-largest annual emitter after China. Developing nations, particularly small island states and least developed countries, have long argued that wealthy nations bear primary responsibility for the climate crisis.

Mr Singh added: “This is not a 'regulatory win', but a catastrophic abdication of duty. By giving the fossil fuel industry a free pass, the US is willfully pouring gasoline on a burning planet.”

Andreas Sieber, head of political strategy at 350.org, told The Independent the repeal would also weaken the country’s economic standing as other nations accelerate the transition to clean energy.

“By dismantling the legal backbone of climate and pollution protections, the administration is trading public health and economic competitiveness for shortterm fossil-fuel interests,” he said.

“The rest of the world races into clean technologies and the United States is choosing to fall further behind. While other countries scale up renewables and electric vehicles, this decision signals retreat and isolation.”

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Gretchen Goldman, president of the Union of Concerned Scientists, said: “The science establishing harm to human health and the environment from global warming emissions was evident in 2009 and it’s even more undeniable today.

“EPA has a legal obligation to regulate this pollution under the Clean Air Act. The American public deserves a government that will face the challenge of the climate crisis head on with proven policy solutions, not actively serve as agents of destruction by worsening it to boost fossil fuel profits.”

The repeal is expected to trigger fresh legal challenges from environmental groups and states that have defended the endangerment finding for more than a decade. Previous court rulings have consistently upheld the agency’s authority to regulate greenhouse gases once the endangerment determination is in place.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/trump-climate-rules-us-crisis-b2918186.html>