



The Medical Society Consortium on  
**CLIMATE & HEALTH**

December 2025

# Rewarding Polluters, Harming Health: EPA's Rollback of Clean Air and Climate Protections

*An action guide from the Medical Society Consortium  
on Climate and Health*



# Background

Recent actions by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are prioritizing the interests of major polluters over the health and well-being of our communities.

By attempting to revoke the Endangerment Finding, weaken protections against fine particulate air pollution, and roll back fuel-efficiency standards, the EPA is dismantling decades of hard-won safeguards—placing children, older adults, pregnant individuals, and communities already overburdened by pollution at greater risk.

These decisions will lead to more illness, premature deaths, and deepened environmental injustice. While the volume of actions can feel overwhelming, their underlying theme is clear: rewarding polluters at the expense of public health.

**This guide highlights examples of what is at stake and how the health community has shown up. We also offer actions to help safeguard the health gains we've achieved together.**

1. CAFE Fuel Efficiency Standards Repeal
2. Endangerment Finding Repeal
3. NAAQS Rollback
4. Power Plant Rules Rollback

# 1. CAFE Fuel Efficiency Standards Repeal

## What the Rule Is

**Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE)** standards require automakers to improve average fuel efficiency over time – reducing gasoline use, air pollution, and consumer fuel expenses. Thanks to CAFE, we've gone from 13.1 mpg in 1975 to 27.1mpg in 2023.

## Administration Actions to Weaken It

The Administration is moving to weaken these protections by ending the Biden-era efficiency standards, dramatically slowing required efficiency improvements to just 0.5% per year, and eliminating penalties for automakers that fail to meet fuel-economy targets. At the same time, it has rolled back incentives that support cleaner vehicles, including electric-vehicle tax credits and federal investments in charging infrastructure.

## Impact if Repealed

Cars and trucks are the largest source of transportation pollution – driving asthma, heart disease, and heat-related illness. Rolling back fuel-efficiency standards may slightly lower sticker prices, but it will cost families far more over time by locking them into cars that burn more gas. Higher fuel bills, combined with poorer health from air pollution, mean families pay more at the pump and in medical costs under weaker CAFE standards.

## Consortium Actions

Take action by [signing up for public testimony](#) by December 31st and/or providing an individual public comment [here](#). Comments are due by January 20, 2026.

## 2. Endangerment Finding Repeal

### What the Rule Is

In 2009, EPA concluded—based on overwhelming scientific evidence—that greenhouse gas pollution endangers public health and welfare. That conclusion has guided EPA’s use of its Clean Air Act authorities to address climate pollution.

### Administration Actions to Weaken It

The Administration has proposed rescinding the Endangerment Finding, directly contradicting decades of established climate science. In doing so, it dismisses clear evidence linking climate pollution to rising heat-related deaths, worsening wildfire smoke, and other climate-driven illnesses, and seeks to strip the EPA of its authority to regulate greenhouse gas pollution under the Clean Air Act.

### Impact if Repealed

Without this finding, EPA loses its main tool to limit climate pollution – allowing unchecked emissions that worsen extreme heat, wildfires, disease spread, storms, crop loss, and hospital disruption.

### Consortium Actions

Mobilized 127 individuals to provide public comment, the Consortium [led a sign-on letter](#) endorsed by 120+ organizations, and the letter was covered [in the news](#).

# 3. PM2.5 National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) Rollback

## What the Rule Is

NAAQS sets limits on fine particulate pollution (PM2.5) – tiny soot particles from vehicles, wildfires, and power plants that drive premature deaths, cardiovascular disease, and dementia. The 2024 standard lowered allowable pollution from 12  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  to 9  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ , projected to prevent up to 4,500 premature deaths per year.

## Administration Actions to Weaken It

The EPA has asked the courts to strike down the strengthened 9  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  PM2.5 standard, siding with industry challengers rather than defending public health. It has also proposed reverting to the weaker 2020 standard.

## Impact if Repealed

PM2.5 contributes to [heart disease, stroke, cognitive decline, premature death, asthma attacks, preterm birth](#) – disproportionately harming Black, Brown, and low-income communities. Weaker soot standards mean more hospitalizations and medical bills, harder breathing for millions of children with asthma, and more days parents miss work to care for sick family members.

## Consortium Actions

Mobilized 192 people to submit public comment, led a sign-on letter, and joined with the [American Lung Association](#) to share individual health professional stories.

# 4. Power Plant Rules Rollback (Mercury & Air Toxics Standards + Carbon Pollution Standards)

## What the Rules Are

The Power Plant Pollution Standards and Mercury & Air Toxics Standards (MATS) limit pollution from coal- and gas-fired power plants, reducing mercury, soot, and greenhouse gases that worsen asthma, heart disease, pregnancy complications, and neurodevelopmental harm in children.

## Administration Actions to Weaken It

The Administration is moving to repeal the carbon pollution rule for existing power plants, weaken or reverse implementation of the Mercury & Air Toxics Standards, and loosen emissions reporting requirements.

## Impact if Repealed

Mercury damages developing brains; particulate pollution triggers asthma attacks, strokes, and heart attacks. These protections save thousands of lives annually, especially for pregnant women, infants, older adults, and communities living nearest to plants.

## Consortium Actions

Mobilized 106 people to provide comment on the carbon pollution standards for power plants, and 130 people for MATS.

# How You Can Take Further Action

## TALK

As we head into the holiday season, take the opportunity to **talk** with friends, colleagues, and loved ones about these actions. Many more people care about climate change than we think, and speaking up helps close the gap between concern and the false perception that no one else cares. **Use these talking points to guide the conversation:**



Clean air rules save lives, especially for children, seniors, and people with asthma.



Rolling back fuel-efficiency standards means families pay more for gas, not less.



Pollution drives healthcare costs with more ER visits, inhalers, and hospital stays.



Every rollback benefits fossil fuel CEOs while American families shoulder the bill.



Clean energy like wind and solar is now cheaper to produce than fossil fuels.



The Administration's energy strategy doubles down on high-cost fossil fuels, leaving families paying more at the pump, breathing dirtier air, and facing higher health costs.



We need a strategy that welcomes clean, affordable energy that can lower costs and protect health.



Protecting health isn't political. Everyone deserves clean air to breathe.

# WRITE

Consider submitting a Letter to the Editor (LTE) to your local paper. [This resource](#) provides a non-exhaustive list of outlets that accept LTEs and their submission guidelines. Local news is more trusted than national outlets, and placement is often easier.

**Here is an example LTE:**

**To the Editor,**

As a [health professional], I am alarmed that the Trump Administration is rolling back protections designed to keep our air clean and our families healthy. Instead of lowering costs for everyday Americans, these rollbacks hand wins to fossil fuel CEOs while families pay the price – at the pump, at the ER, and in utility bills.

Weakening fuel-efficiency standards means drivers will spend more on gas. Rolling back soot protections means more asthma attacks for children and more heart disease for older adults. And repealing the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Endangerment Finding would strip our nation of its most important tool to limit climate pollution.

Americans need relief – not higher fuel costs, higher medical bills, and dirtier air. We should be expanding affordable energy choices like wind and solar, not doubling down on costly fossil fuels that are expensive to extract, transport, refine, and burn.

Our leaders must put public health above corporate profit. Our families deserve clean air, stable energy, and a healthier future.

# ACT

Submit public comment on the CAFE standard [here](#) by January 20, 2026.