

## Opinion: Why is Trump so desperate to make California's air more polluted?



*Smog shrouds downtown Los Angeles in 1956 or, in President Trump's view of air pollution policy, the good old days. (Associated Press)*

By [Scott Martelle](#), Editorial Writer, Sep. 17, 2019 1:57 PM

Well, President Trump huffed and puffed and now, finally, he's getting on with his efforts to blow California's house down.

Trump, who has a bizarre desire to increase air pollution in the United States, has for months threatened to withdraw California's authority under the Clean Air Act to set its own [limits for auto emissions](#).

And now word comes from Washington that he is indeed [seeking to revoke](#) the waiver that allows California to set its own tailpipe emissions standards for cars and light-duty trucks, as it has done for more than five decades.

His reason? He doesn't really have one. It's mostly out of pique. But since the president is in California today and Wednesday raising big bucks at political fundraisers, maybe he can try

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to explain this in person to people whose air quality has improved because of California's use of that imperiled waiver.

Some of this is in keeping with Trump's anti-regulatory impulse, but also with his animus to just about anything the Obama administration accomplished. Trump unveiled plans last year [not to implement](#) tougher national tailpipe standards the Obama administration had slated for 2025, but California — which has long worked to clean its smoggy skies — refused to go along.

In fact, the state and four automakers — Ford Motor Co., Volkswagen of America, Honda and BMW — announced in July an agreement for the manufacturers to meet a higher emissions threshold than the Trump administration wants to set.

Isn't private industry working with government for mutual benefit the kind of relationship Republicans used to embrace? In fact, the impetus behind the decades-old [waiver originated](#) with California Republicans — including then-Gov. Ronald Reagan — and has been viewed as a symbol of California's ability to mesh environmentalism and innovation.

Not for this Republican administration. "You *must* pollute more!" is the admonition to automakers.

And to reinforce the point, the Justice Department has begun an antitrust investigation into the four manufacturers working with California, on legal grounds that are as murky as, say, the air over 1960s Los Angeles.

The legal challenges to Trump's revocation of California's waiver have, I presume, already been penciled out, and we can all start office pools on when and where the first lawsuit will be filed.

And note that more is at stake here than California's ability to build on the emissions baseline set by the federal government. A [dozen other states](#) (all but Pennsylvania are on the

coasts) and the District of Columbia follow California's standards, so revoking the waiver will have a broad impact particularly in the Northeast and on the West Coast.

Hmm, how did [those states vote](#) in the 2016 presidential election?

The Times editorial board has [called Trump's maneuver](#) on the waiver for what it is: "Sometimes it seems like the only consistent policy coming out of the White House these days is vindictiveness."