**EPA Abdicates Enforcement Responsibility - Toolkit**

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# **Interested Parties Memo**

**To:** Interested Parties

**Date:** Month, Day, 2020

**Re:** EPA Administrator Wheeler Abdicates Enforcement Responsibility, Putting [STATE DEMONYMS] At Risk

In the middle of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, President Trump’s Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced it was issuing an [unprecedented and sweeping suspension](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/26/climate/epa-coronavirus-pollution-rules.html) of its enforcement of environmental safeguards. This lawless decision is a direct giveaway to dirty corporate polluters, and comes on the heels of oil and gas industry lobbyists [asking EPA administrator Andrew Wheeler to give them a free pass to pollute](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-oil-api/u-s-oil-industry-asks-trump-for-regulatory-relief-during-coronavirus-outbreak-idUSKBN2172W0) -- putting vulnerable [STATE] communities at grave risk.

For [STATE], this means putting our communities in danger through unchecked air pollution, which severely [exacerbates the severity of COVID-19](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/27/climate/climate-pollution-coronavirus-lungs.html). Experts are warning that [air pollution is likely to increase the death rate from COVID-19](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/17/air-pollution-likely-to-increase-coronavirus-death-rate-warn-experts), and those with [chronic conditions](https://grist.org/justice/one-more-way-the-world-wasnt-prepared-for-coronavirus-air-pollution/) may be less likely to fight off infection. [Insert state specific air pollution impacts].

This abdication of EPA’s responsibility to protect our health and environment must be reversed. The public deserves real leaders who put the EPA’s mission of protecting [STATE’s] health and environment first - not Trump and Wheeler’s toxic environmental agenda that exploits a global pandemic to continue their relentless assault on public health and environmental safeguards.

Responsible companies should continue to meet existing pollution standards and track the pollutants they release into our communities. There is no scientific or public health reason to not do so.

**The Trump EPA Has Consistently Left [STATE DEMONYMS] Vulnerable to Pollution**

Since the Trump administration took office, it has moved to roll back [nearly 100 public health and environment protections](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/climate/trump-environment-rollbacks.html) - leaving our communities, and our air, land, water, climate, and wildlife increasingly vulnerable to the dangerous consequences of pollution and climate change.

The administration has also completed [the fewest cleanups](https://apnews.com/c1d827364ac630d53848ac3ec489788d) of Superfund sites since the 1980s and allowed the backlog to hit [a 15-year high](https://apnews.com/a7b70f21b6c75f95210112390cc813ad), according to figures released by Wheeler’s own agency. In [STATE], this means communities living in proximity to [Insert Superfund Site] are put at risk every day.

**Under the Trump Administration, EPA’s Enforcement of Polluters Has Plummeted**

During the Trump administration, EPA staffing levels [have fallen](https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/368090-epa-staffing-hits-reagan-levels) to Reagan-era levels. This trend would only continue under Trump’s proposed FY 2021 budget, which would [slash EPA’s workforce by 11 percent](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/climate-change-once-again-left-out-of-trumps-federal-budget/). As staff levels at the agency fall, the EPA has seen [an 80% decrease](https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-epa-enforcement-decline-20190208-story.html) in enforcement actions and polluter fines have hit [a two-decade low](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-epa-compliance/epa-fines-for-polluters-at-lowest-level-in-two-decades-data-shows-idUSKCN1PI2UB). What's more, Wheeler has advocated for cutting his agency’s budget by [$2.4 billion, or over 26 percent](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/business/trump-budget-2021/), which would further hamstring EPA’s enforcement ability.

Now, in the middle of a pandemic that disproportionately harms our most sick and vulnerable, Wheeler is walking off the field, leaving every [STATE DEMONYM] to fend for themselves as big polluters are allowed to pollute at will. It’s abundantly clear that this administration does not believe protecting [STATE’S] health and the environment is a priority.

**[STATE DEMONYMS] Deserve Better -- And Deserve to Know How Industry Influenced This Decision**

Wheeler announced this decision only days after energy industry lobbyists submitted a [ten-page request](https://www.eenews.net/assets/2020/03/24/document_gw_05.pdf) to the EPA to relax environmental protections. The industry got its wish, and more, thanks to their relationship with Wheeler. The sad reality is that this decision to end enforcement of our laws will result in loss of life and permanent damage to public health and the environment.

Congress must investigate this dangerous decision and how the oil and gas industry influenced EPA decision-making at the highest levels. [STATE DEMONYMS] deserve better than the Trump administration's dirty polluter agenda that puts corporate polluter interests ahead of their health and wellbeing.

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# **EPA: Superfund and National Priorities List** [**Sites**](https://www.epa.gov/superfund/search-superfund-sites-where-you-live) **By State**

* Alaska has 10 sites linked [HERE](https://www.epa.gov/superfund/search-superfund-sites-where-you-live)
* Arizona has 14 sites linked [HERE](https://www.epa.gov/superfund/search-superfund-sites-where-you-live)
* Colorado has 24 sites linked [HERE](https://www.epa.gov/superfund/search-superfund-sites-where-you-live)
* Iowa has 24 sites linked [HERE](https://www.epa.gov/superfund/search-superfund-sites-where-you-live)
* Maine has 16 sites linked [HERE](https://www.epa.gov/superfund/search-superfund-sites-where-you-live)
* North Carolina has 46 sites linked [HERE](https://www.epa.gov/superfund/search-superfund-sites-where-you-live)
* Pennsylvania has 127 sites linked [HERE](https://www.epa.gov/superfund/search-superfund-sites-where-you-live)
* South Carolina has 37 sites linked [HERE](https://www.epa.gov/superfund/search-superfund-sites-where-you-live)
* Utah has 25 sites linked [HERE](https://www.epa.gov/superfund/search-superfund-sites-where-you-live)
* Virginia has 35 sites linked [HERE](https://www.epa.gov/superfund/search-superfund-sites-where-you-live)
* West Virginia has 13 sites linked [HERE](https://www.epa.gov/superfund/search-superfund-sites-where-you-live)
* Select Violations in CAC States available [HERE](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1r7bEU7-0onNss2jQFiI7WUyG2VprNojuf_eOnjphvoo/edit?usp=sharing). (Note: This list is not exhaustive and includes: states with significant violations; violations in every quarter of the last three years; site inspection at least once in the past five years; or at least one formal enforcement action)

# **Sample Statement**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE

CONTACT

EPA Shamefully Suspends Environmental Enforcement Amidst Global Pandemic

CITY, STATE -- On March 26, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [announced](https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/489753-epa-suspends-enforcement-of-environmental-laws-amid-coronavirus) it has suspended enforcement of U.S. environmental laws indefinitely, blaming the global COVID-19 pandemic. The lack of enforcement is backdated to March 13.

With this lawless and [unprecedented decision](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/26/climate/epa-coronavirus-pollution-rules.html), the EPA is further putting communities in danger through unchecked air pollution and other pollution that threatens our air, water, land and wildlife. Air pollution exacerbates the severity of COVID-19. According to the [New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/27/climate/climate-pollution-coronavirus-lungs.html), the millions of Americans already exposed to air pollution are at a greater risk of COVID-19. Experts are warning that [air pollution is likely to increase the death rate from COVID-19](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/17/air-pollution-likely-to-increase-coronavirus-death-rate-warn-experts), and those with [chronic conditions](https://grist.org/justice/one-more-way-the-world-wasnt-prepared-for-coronavirus-air-pollution/) may be less likely to fight off infection. STATE has XX sites that will now be ignored during this public health crisis.

In response XX released the following statement:

“Protecting everyone from the Coronavirus should be the first priority during this global pandemic, instead, Andrew Wheeler is putting public health at additional risk by issuing a direct giveaway to corporate polluters and suspending enforcement of U.S. laws that protect the environment and public health. Make no mistake, the decision to end enforcement of our laws will result in loss of life and permanent damage to public health and the environment. This decision is an abdication of EPA’s responsibility to protect our health and environment and must be reversed.”

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# **Sign On Letter to Members of Congress**

Dear NAME,

In light the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) announcement that it was issuing a [sweeping suspension of its enforcement of environmental](https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/489753-epa-suspends-enforcement-of-environmental-laws-amid-coronavirus) safeguards during the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, I/we urge you and your fellow members of Congress to immediately launch an investigation into this lawless decision.

Suspending enforcement is a direct giveaway to the fossil fuel industry and exploits a global health pandemic to continue the agency’s relentless rollbacks of public health and environmental safeguards. Congress must exercise its authority and protect our health and environment by getting to the bottom of this lawless and [unprecedented decision by the EPA.](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/26/climate/epa-coronavirus-pollution-rules.html)

Already, Trump’s administration is responsible for the rollbacks of nearly [100 public health and environment protections](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/climate/trump-environment-rollbacks.html) - leaving our communities, and our air, land, water, climate, and wildlife increasingly vulnerable to the dangerous consequences of pollution and climate change. These rollbacks are harming our communities, with estimates that [Trump’s rollbacks of public health safeguards could cause 80,000 more premature deaths per decade in the United States.](https://www.sciencealert.com/harvard-researchers-trump-environmental-agenda-80-000-deaths-epa-data)

The decision to end enforcement of our laws threatens the health of our most vulnerable because it is coming in the middle of a public health crisis that adversely targets the sick. Experts are warning that [air pollution is likely to increase the death rate from COVID-19](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/17/air-pollution-likely-to-increase-coronavirus-death-rate-warn-experts), and those with [chronic conditions](https://grist.org/justice/one-more-way-the-world-wasnt-prepared-for-coronavirus-air-pollution/) may be less likely to fight off infection.

Congress must hold EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler and the Trump administration accountable for leaving the American people to fend for themselves as big polluters are allowed to pollute at will. Wheeler, a former coal industry lobbyist, announced this decision only days after [energy industry lobbyists submitted a ten-page request to the EPA to relax environmental protections](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-oil-api/u-s-oil-industry-asks-trump-for-regulatory-relief-during-coronavirus-outbreak-idUSKBN2172W0). It is troubling that industry lobbyists got their wish and more.

You and your colleagues must investigate this dangerous decision to determine how the oil and gas industry influenced EPA decision-making at the highest levels. As it stands, this decision is an abdication of EPA’s responsibility to protect our health and environment and must be reversed.

I/we look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

NAME

# **Sample Social**

Twitter:

* BREAKING: @EPAAWheeler issued a sweeping suspension of its enforcement of environmental laws Thursday, telling companies they would not need to meet environmental standards during the #COVID19 outbreak.<https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/489753-epa-suspends-enforcement-of-environmental-laws-amid-coronavirus>
* “This @EPA statement is essentially a nationwide waiver of environmental rules for the indefinite future," says Cynthia Giles, who headed EPA’s Office of Enforcement. #COVID19<https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/489753-epa-suspends-enforcement-of-environmental-laws-amid-coronavirus>
* While America is already facing the danger of #COVID19, @realDonaldTrump and @EPAAWheeler suspend @EPA's enforcement of environmental laws. <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/489753-epa-suspends-enforcement-of-environmental-laws-amid-coronavirus>
* I don't know who needs to hear this (@EPAAWheeler), but this is not a good idea. #COVID19 <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/489753-epa-suspends-enforcement-of-environmental-laws-amid-coronavirus>
* Nobody:  
  @EPAAWheeler: Let's suspend enforcement of environmental laws amid #COVID19.  
  <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/489753-epa-suspends-enforcement-of-environmental-laws-amid-coronavirus>
* .@EPAAWheeler’s Pollute-At-Will Edict will cost more lives and irreparably damage public health and the environment. During the #COVID19 global pandemic, making people MORE vulnerable is a grave mistake. <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/489753-epa-suspends-enforcement-of-environmental-laws-amid-coronavirus>
* Congress should investigate the reasons behind @EPAAWheeler’s decision to end all enforcement of environmental laws that came days after big polluters issued a wish list that included relaxing rules about dangerous pollution. <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/489753-epa-suspends-enforcement-of-environmental-laws-amid-coronavirus>

**Facebook:**

* BREAKING: Trump’s [TAG] EPA issued a sweeping suspension of its enforcement of environmental laws Thursday, telling companies they would not need to meet environmental standards during the #COVID19 outbreak. <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/489753-epa-suspends-enforcement-of-environmental-laws-amid-coronavirus>
* While America is already facing the danger of #coronavirus, [TAG] Donald Trump and [TAG] Andrew Wheeler suspend [TAG] EPA's enforcement of environmental laws.<https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/489753-epa-suspends-enforcement-of-environmental-laws-amid-coronavirus>