# Industry Lobbying AMID COVID-19

According to POLITICO, “Lobbyists for industries left reeling by the pandemic were hustling just as hard” as Senate Republicans to shape the trillion-dollar stimulus package. POLITICO reported that “Lobbyists for drone makers and hog farmers — not to mention the oil and gas industry, among others — are looking to hitch a ride on the federal government’s coronavirus response.” Energy executive and major Republican donor Dan Eberhart said, “The oil and gas industry is pushing the administration for [Strategic Petroleum Reserves] purchases, faster drilling permits on federal lands, royalty relief and increased deductions for drilling expenses”.

Key findings:

**White House Had Meetings and Calls with Fossil Fuel Interests Seeking Federal Aid.** According to the Washington Post, “Trump and advisers have been taking calls since Monday from concerned energy sector allies, who have voiced concern and at times exasperation not only about oil prices, but also privately warning against the administration supporting any sweeping paid sick leave policy, according to a major GOP donor and a White House official familiar with the discussions.” CNBC reported that oil and gas lobbyists met with White House policy staffers on Wednesday March 11, 2020.

**After “Onslaught of Requests” From Businesses and State Regulators, EPA Planned to Waive Compliance Requirements on Fossil Fuel and Utility Industries.** According to *The Wall Street Journal*, “The Environmental Protection Agency is planning to waive compliance requirements and deadlines for a range of industries, including oil refiners, water utilities and sewage plants, as it seeks to help businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic, according to Trump administration officials. A business lobbyist and administration officials also told *The Wall Street Journal* that the biggest change would likely be to waive or postpone upcoming deadlines to switch to cleaner-burning summer-grade gasoline. *The Wall Street Journal* added, “The EPA is preparing to act following an onslaught of requests from businesses and state regulators seeking help, according to the administration officials, who expect the decision to be announced this week.” According to E&E News, American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers, the National Mining Association, and the American Chemistry Council all lobbied Trump, members of Congress and governors amid the pandemic.

**EPA Suspended Enforcement of Environmental Laws During COVID-19 Pandemic, With No End Date Set.** On March 26, the Environmental Protection Agency announced that it was suspending the enforcement of environmental laws during the COVID-19 outbreak, “signaling to companies they will not face any sanction for polluting the air or water of Americans,” The Guardian wrote. According to The Guardian, “There is no end date set for this dropping of enforcement.” The decision followed lobbying by the American Petroleum Institute, but according to The Guardian, “The EPA’s move goes even further” than API’s request. Prior to the announcement, the American Petroleum Institute and the American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers “both urged the Trump administration to waive certain environmental testing and reporting requirements,” E&E News reported. The Guardian wrote, “The air pollution that industrial plants will not have to monitor damages the respiratory system, which is especially dangerous for already at-risk populations who may also become infected with Covid-19, which attacks the lungs.”

**Trump Ally Harold Hamm, Chair of Shale-Driller Continental Resources, Personally Lobbied the White House and Members of Congress.** Trump supporter and adviser Harold Hamm -who is the executive chairman of shale-drilling company Continental Resources Inc. – was “among those who personally lobbied Administration officials and Members of Congress,” according to *The Wall Street Journal*. The Wall Street Journal reported, that Hamm was among the oil interests that pressed the White House and Congress for a diplomatic push “to get the Saudis to cut oil production and threats of sanctions on Russia aimed at stabilizing prices”. Forbes reported: “Hamm, having lost billions in the downturn, has been lobbying for a federal investigation into Russian and Saudi illegal dumping.”

**Oil Companies Pressed the Trump Administration to Intervene in Saudi-Russian Oil-Price War**. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, Administration officials explored, “a diplomatic push to get the Saudis to cut oil production and threats of sanctions on Russia aimed at stabilizing prices, after U.S. oil companies pressed them to intercede, people familiar with the matter said.” The *Journal* continued, “Oil companies and their trade groups have visited with officials at the White House, Treasury and Commerce departments asking for Trump administration help. A ramp-up in diplomatic intervention was one of the most common requests, along with purchases for the reserve, several people familiar with those meetings said.”

**After Meeting with Oil and Gas Lobbyists, Trump Pledged to Purchase Up to 77 Million Barrels of Oil for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.** On March 11, 2020, Oil and Gas lobbyists reportedly met with White House officials. On March 16, POLITICO reported that Energy executive Dan Eberhart told said, “The oil and gas industry is pushing the administration for [Strategic Petroleum Reserves] purchases, faster drilling permits on federal lands, royalty relief and increased deductions for drilling expenses”. On Thursday March 19, the Department of Energy announced it would purchase 30 million barrels of oil from producers, “fulfilling a pledge by President Trump to offer assistance to the oil industry as prices plummet with the twin threats of the coronavirus and a pricing war between Saudi Arabia and Russia,” *The Hill* reported. Trump then pledged the following day, Friday, to fill the Strategic Petroleum Reserve “right up to the top” with 77 million barrels.

**During Pandemic, Trump Secretary of State Mike Pompeo Said the U.S. Needed to End Reliance on China and Foreign Nations for Uranium.** According to E&E News, on March 26, 2020, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that the novel coronavirus showed why the U.S. needed to stop relying on China and other foreign countries for uranium and other minerals. In an interview on Hugh Hewitt’s morning show, Pompeo said: “We need to fundamentally review our supply chains and make sure that we know those supply chains and have control over them for moments just like this.” E&E News reported: “Pompeo called the problem ‘absolutely critical’ and added rare earth elements. China controls 80% of global supply of the 17 minerals increasingly used in new military and civilian technologies. He said businesses are now realizing the ‘political risk.’” S&P Global reported, “A Trump administration effort to expand the domestic sourcing of nuclear fuel is believed to be stalled amid the government response to the coronavirus pandemic, frustrating U.S. uranium producers that believe the crisis may exacerbate fault lines in the supply chain for nuclear-powered utilities.”

## Background

**POLITICO: Oil and Gas Industry, Among Others “Looking to Hitch a Ride on the Federal Government’s Coronavirus Response.”** “Lobbyists for drone makers and hog farmers — not to mention the oil and gas industry, among others — are looking to hitch a ride on the federal government’s coronavirus response. The deluge of ‘asks,’ as K Street refers to such pleas, include policies that might help address the crisis and revive the economy. But other proposals are similar to ones the same industries have pushed for years and have only a tenuous connection to the pandemic. Even some in the influence industry are calling foul. ‘Some of the requests for aid appear opportunistic on their face while others seem truly desperate,’ the lobbyist Dave Oxner wrote in a recent note to clients.” [POLITICO, [3/16/20](https://www.politico.com/news/2020/03/16/lobbyists-coronavirus-relief-efforts-131541)]

**Energy Executive Dan Eberhart: Oil and Gas Industry Pushed the Administration for Strategic Petroleum Purchases, Faster Drilling Permits on Federal Lands, Royalty Relief and Increased Deductions for Drilling Expenses.** “Other examples abound. ‘The oil and gas industry is pushing the administration for [Strategic Petroleum Reserves] purchases, faster drilling permits on federal lands, royalty relief and increased deductions for drilling expenses,’ said Dan Eberhart, an energy executive and major Republican donor. Aside from the suggestion that the administration buy oil for the petroleum reserve as a way to help oil producers — which Trump announced he would do on Friday — the other measures have been part of the industry’s wish list for years.” [POLITICO, [3/16/20](https://www.politico.com/news/2020/03/16/lobbyists-coronavirus-relief-efforts-131541)]

**Former ConocoPhillips Lobbyist Don Duncan: “This Kind Of Economic Package Is Going To Create A Lot Of Mischief.”** “Some lobbyists warn of a public backlash if the stimulus package turns into a big honeypot where money is disbursed to big business with too few controls. ‘I think the public is going to look very skeptically at special industry bailouts that don’t address critical needs in the midst of the crisis,’ said John Jonas, a veteran healthcare lobbyist with Akin Gump, a giant law and lobbying firm. ‘This kind of economic package is going to create a lot of mischief,’ said Don Duncan, who used to run the DC office of oil giant ConocoPhillips. ‘Congress and the administration need to clearly define where such economic help is justified and needed most to avoid misuse of tax dollars.’” [The Guardian, [3/20/20](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/20/coronavirus-washington-lobbyists-bailout)]

**CNBC: Reports Indicated President Trump Was Considering a Federal Aid Package for the Shale Industry, Potentially in the Form of Low-Interest Loans.** “Still, the American Petroleum Institute, which represents companies including Halliburton, Hess and Occidental Petroleum, is not seeking federal aid, said the the spokeswoman, Bethany Aronhalt. That statement comes despite reports Tuesday indicating President Donald Trump was considering a federal aid package for the shale industry, potentially in the form of low-interest loans. An official told CNBC that the White House doesn’t want the potential assistance to be perceived as a bailout. White House declined to comment.” [CNBC, [3/11/20]](https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/11/oil-lobbyists-met-with-white-house-staffers-amid-opec-price-war-coronavirus.html)

* **Senior Administration Official Said the Shale Industry Would Probably be Included in Aid Package.** “White House officials are alarmed at the prospect that numerous shale companies, many of them deep in debt, could be driven out of business if the downturn in oil prices turns into a prolonged crisis for the industry. The federal assistance is likely to take the form of low-interest government loans to the shale companies, whose lines of credit to major financial institutions have been choked off, three people said. […] A senior administration official said Tuesday the shale industry would probably be included for help but may not be at the top of the list for assistance.” [The Washington Post, [3/10/20](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/03/10/trump-oil-bailout/)]

### White House Had Meetings and Calls with Fossil Fuel Interests Seeking Federal Aid

**Washington Post: “White House is Strongly Considering Pushing Federal Assistance For Oil And Natural Gas Producers Hit By Plummeting Oil Prices Amid The Coronavirus Outbreak”.**  “The White House is strongly considering pushing federal assistance for oil and natural gas producers hit by plummeting oil prices amid the coronavirus outbreak, as industry officials close to the administration clamor for help, according to four people familiar with internal deliberations. President Trump has touted the growth of oil and natural gas production under his administration, celebrating their rise in politically crucial swing states such as Pennsylvania. But many oil and gas firms were hammered Monday by the price war that broke out between Saudi Arabia and Russia, driving oil prices down in their steepest one-day drop in almost 30 years.”[The Washington Post, [3/10/20](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/03/10/trump-oil-bailout/)]

**“Trump and Advisers Have Been Taking Calls Since Monday From Concerned Energy Sector Allies…”** “Trump and advisers have been taking calls since Monday from concerned energy sector allies, who have voiced concern and at times exasperation not only about oil prices, but also privately warning against the administration supporting any sweeping paid sick leave policy, according to a major GOP donor and a White House official familiar with the discussions. These people spoke on the condition of anonymity to candidly discuss private conversations.” [The Washington Post, [3/10/20](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/03/10/trump-oil-bailout/)]

**March 11: “Lobbyists Representing the Oil and Gas Industry Met with White House Policy Staffers to Discuss Coronavirus.** “Lobbyists representing the oil and gas industry met with White House policy staffers Wednesday morning to discuss coronavirus, the state of the economy and the market, a representative for the American Petroleum Institute told CNBC. The meeting comes as the market has been roiled by fears of coronavirus and deteriorating OPEC talks. After negotiations between OPEC and Russia fell apart on Friday, OPEC’s de facto leader, Saudi Arabia, on Saturday slashed its oil prices and announced plans to increase production. This led to a selloff in oil markets and pressure on U.S. energy producers.” [CNBC, [3/11/20](https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/11/oil-lobbyists-met-with-white-house-staffers-amid-opec-price-war-coronavirus.html)]

* **American Petroleum Institute, Which Participated in the Meeting Claimed They Lobbied Against Helping Companies Suffering from a Collapse in Crude Prices.** “The largest U.S. oil and gas trade group participated in a meeting at the White House Wednesday and lobbied against intervention by the federal government to help companies suffering from a collapse in crude prices. ‘We are not advocating for any form of policy relief at this time,’ said Bethany Aronhalt, a spokeswoman for the American Petroleum Institute, who confirmed the meeting to the Washington Examiner. ‘Our focus is on ensuring the free market works.’ Aronhalt said several member company representatives also attended the meeting with White House policy staff, but she did not disclose which ones.” [Washington Examiner, [3/11/20](https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/policy/energy/largest-oil-trade-group-lobbies-in-white-house-meeting-against-policy-relief-for-price-crash)]

### After “Onslaught of Requests” From Businesses and State Regulators, EPA Planned to Waive Compliance Requirements on Fossil Fuel and Utility Industries

**EPA Planned to Waive Compliance Requirements for a Range of Industries, Including Oil Refiners, Water Utilities and Sewage Plants.** “The Environmental Protection Agency is planning to waive compliance requirements and deadlines for a range of industries, including oil refiners, water utilities and sewage plants, as it seeks to help businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic, according to Trump administration officials. The biggest change likely will be to waive or postpone coming deadlines to switch to cleaner-burning summer-grade gasoline, according to administration officials and a business lobbyist. Several states have already issued waivers or said they won’t enforce them, an analyst said. And many have asked EPA to step in to clarify nationally, according to one administration official.” [The Wall Street Journal, [3/24/20](https://www.wsj.com/articles/epa-plans-to-waive-some-compliance-requirements-amid-coronavirus-crisis-11585072822)]

**Wall Street Journal: EPA Had an “Onslaught of Requests from Businesses and State Regulators Seeking Help.”** “The EPA is preparing to act following an onslaught of requests from businesses and state regulators seeking help, according to the administration officials, who expect the decision to be announced this week. Any action is expected to be scrutinized by environmental groups concerned that the EPA and business groups will take advantage of the situation to skirt environmental regulations. Under President Trump, the EPA has moved to amend environmental policies that the White House views as overly harmful to business.” [The Wall Street Journal, [3/24/20](https://www.wsj.com/articles/epa-plans-to-waive-some-compliance-requirements-amid-coronavirus-crisis-11585072822)]

**American Petroleum Institute Sent a Letter to EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler Asking for Blanket, “Temporary Relief” Through Enforcement Discretion, Waivers, and Delayed Deadlines.** “The oil industry’s largest trade group, the American Petroleum Institute, sent a letter to EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler on Monday asking for blanket, ‘temporary relief’ for the whole industry through enforcement discretion, waivers and delayed deadlines. The uncertainty of the pandemic has limited what API members can do, the organization said at the start of a seven-page list of tasks those companies may have trouble completing while employees work from home, including lab testing, wastewater monitoring, and cleaning up contaminated soil and groundwater. ‘Individual company requests for relief would be burdensome to file and track and a more holistic approach may be necessary in an unprecedented situation such as the one we are facing,’ wrote Frank Macchiarola, the group’s senior vice president of policy, economics and regulatory affairs. ‘Nonetheless, industry will make efforts to comply with requirements, but obviously the situation may limit some activities.’ ” [The Wall Street Journal, [3/24/20](https://www.wsj.com/articles/epa-plans-to-waive-some-compliance-requirements-amid-coronavirus-crisis-11585072822)]

* **The Hill: API Executives Wrote to Both President Trump and the EPA.** [The Hill, [3/23/20](https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/489128-oil-industry-group-asks-trump-administration-to-lessen-regulations)]

**Wall Street Journal: “The Agency May Delay Many Deadlines At Cleanup Sites It Oversees Across The Country, According To Administration Officials And A Lobbyist.”** “The agency may delay many deadlines at cleanup sites it oversees across the country, according to administration officials and a lobbyist. How far the EPA will go isn’t clear; according to one of the officials, the EPA is working to determine whether that would include sites in the Superfund program, which manages places highly contaminated by lead, asbestos, radiation and other pollutants that can cause cancer, birth defects and other health and environmental harm.” [The Wall Street Journal, [3/24/20](https://www.wsj.com/articles/epa-plans-to-waive-some-compliance-requirements-amid-coronavirus-crisis-11585072822)]

**Wall Street Journal: EPA “Also Considering Whether To Give More Discretion To State Regulators Enforcing the Clean Water Act”.** “The agency is also considering whether to give more discretion to state regulators enforcing the Clean Water Act, that official said. Several states are looking to the EPA for specifics of how to deal with water utilities and wastewater plants, said Julia Anastasio, executive director of The Association of Clean Water Administrators, which represents the state agencies that oversee sewage treatment plants and industrial facilities that discharge wastewater. States are having those facilities report to them on what they can’t do, and have seen virus preparations make it difficult for facilities to hand-deliver lab samples, monitor water intakes and do other tasks required by clean-water rules, she said.” [The Wall Street Journal, [3/24/20](https://www.wsj.com/articles/epa-plans-to-waive-some-compliance-requirements-amid-coronavirus-crisis-11585072822)]

**E&E News: American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers (AFPM) Was “Engaging With Regulators To Proactively Identify Rules That Could Benefit From Flexibility...”** “The American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers (AFPM), a refinery trade group, ‘is engaging with regulators to proactively identify rules that could benefit from flexibility, including reporting deadline extensions,’ a spokesperson said today. ‘In many instances, employees responsible for reporting are now working remotely and auditors are restricted from travel.’ Like the American Petroleum Institute (API), another oil industry trade group, AFPM is also asking EPA to consider waiving summertime limits on gasoline volatility, which are intended to reduce smog.” [E&E News, [3/24/20](https://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1062690723)]

**E&E News: National Mining Association Pitched a Coal Industry Aid Package to Trump, Speaker Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.** “The National Mining Association last week pitched a coal industry aid package to Trump, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.). NMA wants federal help fixing a cash flow problem that the group says threatens 81,000 coal mining jobs. The group also urged Congress to slash rates of the tax covering black lung benefits for sick miners whose former companies have gone bankrupt, to temporarily halve the Abandoned Mine Land fee, and suspend or reduce federal royalty payments. ‘In a perilous time, the essential work of our coal miners to produce the fuel to keep the lights on and homes warm and the certainty and security provided by coal power is just what we need to keep the country moving forward,’ NMA President and CEO Rich Nolan wrote (Energywire, March 20).” [E&E News, [3/24/20](https://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1062690723)]

**E&E News: American Chemistry Council Asked Trump and 50 Governors to Allow Them to Continue Working During the Crisis.** “Chemical and fertilizer makers’ main request so far has been to keep working during the crisis. The White House has advised no gatherings larger than 10 people, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is encouraging people to engage in social distancing, among other measures. ‘While many of these limitations are currently in the best interest of public health, it is essential that key industries and sectors, including the chemical manufacturing sector, are able to maintain operations throughout this challenging time,’ American Chemistry Council CEO Chris Jahn wrote last week in a letter to Trump and 50 governors (E&E News PM, March 18).” [E&E News, [3/24/20](https://www.eenews.net/greenwire/stories/1062690723)]

### EPA Suspended Enforcement of Environmental Laws During COVID-19 Pandemic, Leaving the Fossil Fuel Industry to Police Itself during a Historic Public Health Crisis

**EPA Suspended Enforcement of Environmental Laws During the COVID-19 Outbreak, “Signaling to Companies They Will Not Face Any Sanction for Polluting the Air or Water of Americans.”** “The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has suspended its enforcement of environmental laws during the ongoing coronavirus outbreak, signaling to companies they will not face any sanction for polluting the air or water of Americans. In an extraordinary move that has stunned former EPA officials, the Trump administration said it will not expect compliance with the routine monitoring and reporting of pollution and won’t pursue penalties for breaking these rules. Polluters will be able to ignore environmental laws as long as they can claim in some way these violations were caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. In the event of an imminent threat to public health, the EPA will defer to the states and ‘consider the circumstances’ over whether it should intervene.” [The Guardian, [3/27/20](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/27/trump-pollution-laws-epa-allows-companies-pollute-without-penalty-during-coronavirus)]

**The “Enforcement Discretion” Decision Was Announced on March 26th by EPA Assistant Administrator Susan Bodine.** “EPA's top enforcement official today released the agency’s plan for exercising ‘enforcement discretion’ for situations caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic. The policy is retroactive to March 13, the date President Trump declared the pandemic a national emergency. The memo by Assistant Administrator Susan Bodine says the agency understands social distancing and other measures could make it difficult to comply with some deadlines and requirements. ‘The agency must take these important considerations into account as we all continue our work to protect human health and the environment,’ Bodine wrote.” [E&E News, [3/26/20](https://www.eenews.net/eenewspm/stories/1062709381/search?keyword=epa+enforcement)]

**The Guardian: “There is No End Date Set for This Dropping of Enforcement.”** “There is no end date set for this dropping of enforcement. Andrew Wheeler, administrator of the EPA, said that coronavirus had made it difficult for businesses to protect workers and the public while adhering to clean air and water rules. ‘This temporary policy is designed to provide enforcement discretion under the current, extraordinary conditions, while ensuring facility operations continue to protect human health and the environment,’ Wheeler said.” [The Guardian, [3/27/20](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/27/trump-pollution-laws-epa-allows-companies-pollute-without-penalty-during-coronavirus)]

**HuffPost: EPA “[L]eaving the Fossil Fuel, Chemical And Agribusiness Industries To Police Themselves Amid A Historic Public Health Crisis.”** “On Thursday afternoon, the Environmental Protection Agency announced it would suspend enforcement of bedrock clean air and water laws, leaving the fossil fuel, chemical and agribusiness industries to police themselves amid a historic public health crisis. Hours later, the U.S. Department of Agriculture confirmed a waiver allowing a private company to take over inspection duties at a Tyson Foods beef slaughterhouse.” [HuffPost, [3/27/20](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/trump-epa-coronavirus-environment-deregulation_n_5e7e3227c5b6cb9dc19f6728)]

**“The Relaxation Of Environmental Laws Follows Lobbying from the American Petroleum Institute” But EPA’s Move “Goes Even Further Than” API’s Request.** “The relaxation of environmental laws follows lobbying from the American Petroleum Institute, an oil and gas industry group, which sent the EPA a letter this week calling for the suspension of rules requiring repair of leaky equipment as well as monitoring of pollution. The EPA’s move goes even further than this request, although the regulator said it expects businesses will comply with laws ‘where reasonably practicable’ and that it will not tolerate flagrant, intentional breaches of the law. However, Michael Brune, executive director of Sierra Club, indicated that the move may be challenged in the courts. ‘While there may be no limit to the lengths Trump and Wheeler are willing to go for corporate polluters, there is a limit to what the public will allow,’ Brune said.” [The Guardian, [3/27/20](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/27/trump-pollution-laws-epa-allows-companies-pollute-without-penalty-during-coronavirus)]

**The Guardian: Air Pollution, Which Plants Will Not Have to Monitor Damages the Respiratory System, is Especially Dangerous for At-Risk Populations Who May Become Infected with COVID-19, Which Attacked the Lungs.** “There is particular concern over air pollution emitted by industrial facilities, which are predominantly located in communities with large numbers of low-income people and people of color. Covid-19 attacks the respiratory system, with its spread causing states to scramble for more ventilators to prevent thousands of infected people from dying. The air pollution that industrial plants will not have to monitor damages the respiratory system, which is especially dangerous for already at-risk populations who may also become infected with Covid-19, which attacks the lungs.” [The Guardian, [3/27/20](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/27/trump-pollution-laws-epa-allows-companies-pollute-without-penalty-during-coronavirus)]

**Former EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy Said the Decision Amounted to “an Open License to Pollute. Plain and Simple.”** “The EPA’s order drew swift condemnation. The Center for Biological Integrity called it an ‘unconscionable’ priority as the administration refuses to ‘push utilities to help ordinary people struggling to keep their lights and water on.’ Gina McCarthy, who served as EPA administrator during President Barack Obama’s second term, said the decision amounted to ‘an open license to pollute. Plain and simple.’ ‘The administration should be giving its all toward making our country healthier right now,’ McCarthy, who now leads the Natural Resources Defense Council, said in a statement.” [HuffPost, [3/27/20](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/trump-epa-coronavirus-environment-deregulation_n_5e7e3227c5b6cb9dc19f6728)]

**Former Head of EPA Enforcement Cynthia Giles: The Decision is, “An Abdication of EPA’s Responsibility to Protect the Public.”** “The new stance has caused uproar among former EPA officials and environmental groups who warn that the sweeping will pose a further risk to public health amid the pandemic. ‘EPA should never relinquish its right and its obligation to act immediately and decisively when there is threat to public health, no matter what the reason is,’ said Cynthia Giles, who was head of EPA enforcement during the Obama administration. ‘I am not aware of any instance when EPA ever relinquished this fundamental authority as it does in this memo. This memo amounts to a nationwide moratorium on enforcing the nation’s environmental laws and is an abdication of EPA’s responsibility to protect the public.’ A letter sent to the EPA by Giles and a number of other environmental advocates states that while it may be ‘reasonable in limited circumstances’ to relax certain enforcement during the crisis, the blanket waiver of environmental requirements poses a danger to the American public.” [The Guardian, [3/27/20](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/mar/27/trump-pollution-laws-epa-allows-companies-pollute-without-penalty-during-coronavirus)]

**E&E News: Oil Companies are Likely to be Happy with the New Guidance After Urging the Trump Administration to Waive Certain Environmental Testing and Reporting Requirements.** “Oil companies are likely to be happy with the new guidance. The American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers and American Petroleum Institute have both urged the Trump administration to waive certain environmental testing and reporting requirements (Greenwire, March 24). Environmental groups have been suspicious, having repeatedly accused the Trump administration of looking for excuses to soften its response to pollution.” [E&E News, [3/26/20](https://www.eenews.net/eenewspm/stories/1062709381/search?keyword=epa+enforcement)]

### Trump Ally Harold Hamm, Chair of Shale-Driller Continental Resources, Personally Lobbied the White House and Members of Congress

**Trump Supporter and Continental Resources Founder Harold Hamm, Who is an Adviser to the President, Said He Reached Out to Administration Officials But Had Not Made “Direct” Contact.** “One of the companies hardest hit was Continental Resources, founded by Harold Hamm, a Trump supporter and an adviser to the president on energy issues. It lost more than half of its market value Monday, though it recovered about 8 percent by midday Tuesday. Hamm’s 77 percent personal stake in the company lost $2 billion of its value Monday. Hamm said in an interview Tuesday he had reached out to the administration but had not made ‘direct’ contact. He said that the administration should consider using laws on illegal dumping to prevent Russia and Saudi Arabia from slashing prices of oil sold in the United States. Hamm said the administration should consider ‘any action that the administration might take to protect and preserve American interests at this time from being unfairly disadvantaged by whatever government — and we’re talking governments here, whether it be Russia or Saudi Arabia.’” [The Washington Post, [3/10/20](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/03/10/trump-oil-bailout/)]

* **The Wall Street Journal: Hamm “Among Those Who Personally Lobbied Administration Officials and Members of Congress for the Diplomatic Push” in the Saudi-Russia Oil Price War.** “Harold Hamm, the executive chairman of shale-driller Continental Resources Inc. and the leader of the Domestic Energy Producers Alliance, was among those who personally lobbied administration officials and members of Congress for a diplomatic push, these people said. A spokeswoman for Mr. Hamm said he didn’t seek cooperation with the Saudis and didn’t know about the administration’s outreach strategy.” [The Wall Street Journal, [3/19/20](https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-considers-intervention-in-saudi-russia-oil-standoff-11584636054?emailToken=2a44ba5d29832b30fe16041dfc0c2b1fb28svZ8Vkc1GaP2ko+C6N+PG2H++t6pgxeG%2F1szaOPCwPjR%2F8YaQo7a2WS+rEQQMIANOGTQ1MPROFdcaXmE7KlCsMmq5qZHSCYLMnJ1rHOuFktqn3DKL8F8CApv6ELO0&reflink=article_imessage_share)]
* **Forbes: “Hamm, Having Lost Billions In The Downturn, Has Been Lobbying For A Federal Investigation Into Russian And Saudi Illegal Dumping.”** “Hamm, having lost billions in the downturn, has been lobbying for a federal investigation into Russian and Saudi illegal dumping. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin suggested today that Congress should appropriate $20 billion to essentially buy 1 billion barrels of cheap oil and save it for a rainy day.” [Forbes, [3/19/20](https://www.forbes.com/sites/christopherhelman/2020/03/19/just-six-months-to-tank-tops-in-race-to-store-up-cheap-oil/#66e335947730)]

### Oil Companies Pressed the Trump Administration to Intervene in Saudi-Russian Oil-Price War

**Wall Street Journal: “Administration Officials Are Exploring A Diplomatic Push To Get The Saudis To Cut Oil Production…** **After U.S. Oil Companies Pressed Them To Intercede”.** “Saudi Arabia moved earlier this month to boost its production rapidly, contributing to a steep drop in oil prices. The Trump administration is considering intervening in the Saudi-Russian oil-price war, and Texas regulators are weighing whether to curtail crude production for the first time in decades, as U. S. producers suffer from a historic crash in prices. Administration officials are exploring a diplomatic push to get the Saudis to cut oil production and threats of sanctions on Russia aimed at stabilizing prices, after U.S. oil companies pressed them to intercede, people familiar with the matter said. Meanwhile, the Texas Railroad Commission, which regulates the oil industry in the state, is examining potential limits on production there after several oil executives reached out to members requesting relief, people familiar with the matter said. ‘We were hoping the Trump administration could use that tool in negotiations with the Saudis and also the Russians,’ said Pioneer Natural Resources Co. Chief Executive Scott Sheffield, who said he has spoken with Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and regulators in recent days.” [The Wall Street Journal, [3/19/20](https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-considers-intervention-in-saudi-russia-oil-standoff-11584636054?emailToken=2a44ba5d29832b30fe16041dfc0c2b1fb28svZ8Vkc1GaP2ko+C6N+PG2H++t6pgxeG%2F1szaOPCwPjR%2F8YaQo7a2WS+rEQQMIANOGTQ1MPROFdcaXmE7KlCsMmq5qZHSCYLMnJ1rHOuFktqn3DKL8F8CApv6ELO0&reflink=article_imessage_share)]

**Wall Street Journal: “Oil Companies and Their Trade Groups Have Visited With Officials At The White House, Treasury And Commerce Departments Asking For Trump Administration Help.”** “Oil companies and their trade groups have visited with officials at the White House, Treasury and Commerce departments asking for Trump administration help. A ramp-up in diplomatic intervention was one of the most common requests, along with purchases for the reserve, several people familiar with those meetings said. But companies have had different agendas, and different priorities for the administration’s response. Several have been asking the administration to gather its allies in the Group of Seven nations to engage Saudi Arabia with a united front, several people familiar with the discussions said.” [The Wall Street Journal, [3/19/20](https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-considers-intervention-in-saudi-russia-oil-standoff-11584636054?emailToken=2a44ba5d29832b30fe16041dfc0c2b1fb28svZ8Vkc1GaP2ko+C6N+PG2H++t6pgxeG%2F1szaOPCwPjR%2F8YaQo7a2WS+rEQQMIANOGTQ1MPROFdcaXmE7KlCsMmq5qZHSCYLMnJ1rHOuFktqn3DKL8F8CApv6ELO0&reflink=article_imessage_share)]

**Trump Supporter and Chairman of Shale-Driller Continental Resources Harold Hamm “Among Those Who Personally Lobbied Administration Officials and Members of Congress for the Diplomatic Push”.** “Harold Hamm, the executive chairman of shale-driller Continental Resources Inc. and the leader of the Domestic Energy Producers Alliance, was among those who personally lobbied administration officials and members of Congress for a diplomatic push, these people said. A spokeswoman for Mr. Hamm said he didn’t seek cooperation with the Saudis and didn’t know about the administration’s outreach strategy.” [The Wall Street Journal, [3/19/20](https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-considers-intervention-in-saudi-russia-oil-standoff-11584636054?emailToken=2a44ba5d29832b30fe16041dfc0c2b1fb28svZ8Vkc1GaP2ko+C6N+PG2H++t6pgxeG%2F1szaOPCwPjR%2F8YaQo7a2WS+rEQQMIANOGTQ1MPROFdcaXmE7KlCsMmq5qZHSCYLMnJ1rHOuFktqn3DKL8F8CApv6ELO0&reflink=article_imessage_share)]

### After Meeting with Oil and Gas Lobbyists, Trump Pledged to Assist the Oil Industry by Purchasing Between 30 Million-77 Million Barrels of Oil for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

**POLITICO: The Oil and Gas Industry Pushed the Administration for Strategic Petroleum Reserve Purchases.** “Other examples abound. ‘The oil and gas industry is pushing the administration for [Strategic Petroleum Reserves] purchases, faster drilling permits on federal lands, royalty relief and increased deductions for drilling expenses,’ said Dan Eberhart, an energy executive and major Republican donor. Aside from the suggestion that the administration buy oil for the petroleum reserve as a way to help oil producers — which Trump announced he would do on Friday — the other measures have been part of the industry’s wish list for years.” [POLITICO, [3/16/20](https://www.politico.com/news/2020/03/16/lobbyists-coronavirus-relief-efforts-131541)]

**March 19: Department of Energy Announced It Would Fulfill Trump’s Pledge to Assist the Oil Industry by Buying at Least 30 Million Barrels of Oil from Producers As Prices Plummeted.** “The U.S. government will buy 30 million barrels of oil from producers amid a financial downturn for the industry. The Department of Energy (DOE) announced Thursday it would conduct the sales to fill the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR), fulfilling a pledge by President Trump to offer assistance to the oil industry as prices plummet with the twin threats of the coronavirus and a pricing war between Saudi Arabia and Russia. ‘It is a common sense move. Everyone who has done any version of investing knows you try to buy low and sell high. The same goes with filling the SPR over time,’ Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette said in a call with reporters. This initial purchase comes as oil has fallen to about $25 per barrel, down from roughly $50 a month ago and a steep decline from the average $60 pricetag for oil already in the reserve. The 30 million barrel purchase announced Thursday is a far cry from Trump’s Friday pledge to fill America’s emergency fuel supply ‘right up to the top,’ maxing out at 77 million barrels.” [The Hill, [3/19/20]](https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/488422-trump-administration-prepares-to-buy-30m-barrels-of-oil-amid)

**DOE Secretary Dan Brouillette Said He asked Congress for $3 Billion to Buy 77 Million Barrels.** “Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette said last week he had asked Congress for $3 billion to buy 77 million barrels of oil for the SPR, held in caverns on the Texas and Louisiana coasts. He said the DOE would buy an initial 30 million barrels by the end of June as a first step in fulfilling President Donald Trump’s directive to fill the emergency stockpile to help domestic crude producers.” [Reuters, [3/25/20](https://www.reuters.com/article/usa-oil-spr/update-1-trump-admin-looks-to-buy-oil-for-reserve-out-of-energy-dept-budget-sources-idUSL1N2BI1YD)]

**CNBC: Oil and Gas Lobbyists Met with White House Policy Staffers on Wednesday Prior to Trump’s SPR Purchase Pledge.** “Oil and gas lobbyists met with White House policy staffers Wednesday morning to discuss the administration’s response to the economy, OPEC price war and the coronavirus, a representative for the American Petroleum Institute told CNBC. Meanwhile, the Energy Department had on Tuesday suspended the sale of crude oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve that would have put more oil into the market.” [CNBC, [3/13/20](https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/13/trump-asks-energy-department-to-purchase-oil-for-the-strategic-petroleum-reserve.html)]

**Reuters: After the Funding Was Excluded from the $2 Trillion Senate Stimulus Bill, Trump Administration is Exploring Whether it Can Find Money in DOE’s Budget for the Purchase.** “The Trump administration is exploring whether it can find money in the U.S. Department of Energy’s budget to buy oil for the nation’s emergency crude reserve after funding was not included in the $2 trillion stimulus bill the Senate is expected to pass soon, three sources familiar with the matter said. The administration has told energy interests not to worry, that money will be found in the DOE’s budget, one of the sources said, though it was unclear how much money could be arranged that way. The administration prefers that Congress fund the purchase, but that route has been slowed down by lawmakers concerned that it would serve as a bailout for the oil industry.” [Reuters, [3/25/20](https://www.reuters.com/article/usa-oil-spr/update-1-trump-admin-looks-to-buy-oil-for-reserve-out-of-energy-dept-budget-sources-idUSL1N2BI1YD)]

### American Petroleum Institute Praised Administration for Postponing the Sale from Strategic Petroleum Reserve

**DOE Postponed the Start of a Sale from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, Which Would Have Driven Crude Prices Down Further.** “The Energy Department on Tuesday postponed the start of a sale from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which would have driven crude prices down further. Although the reserve once held 727 million barrels, Congress passed legislation that requires the government to sell parts of the reserve at regular intervals to help cover the federal deficit and cover the cost of the reserve’s maintenance and upgrades. ‘Given current oil markets, this is not the optimal time for the sale,’ an Energy Department spokesman said.” [The Washington Post, [3/10/20](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/03/10/trump-oil-bailout/)]

**Wall Street Journal: The Move “Could Provide Some Relief for Battered Oil Markets.”** “With oil prices down sharply, the Energy Department postponed a sale from the government’s Strategic Petroleum Reserve that had been scheduled for Tuesday -- a move that could provide some relief for battered oil markets. The Trump administration is seeking to shore up financial markets hit hard by fears over the coronavirus and an oil glut. Crude prices Monday had their biggest one-day percentage drop since 1991, triggered by a price war between Saudi Arabia and Russia as they struggle over dwindling demand from an economic slowdown in China. James Lucier, a managing director at Capital Alpha Partners LLC, said the action fits in with the Trump administration’s plan to shore up financial markets and the broader economy.” [The Wall Street Journal, [3/11/20](https://www.wsj.com/articles/heds-to-flash-11583848098)]

**American Petroleum Institute Chief Executive Mike Sommers: “We Were Pleased That the Administration Decided Not to Begin a Sale of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve”.** “American Petroleum Institute chief executive Mike Sommers said that ‘We were pleased that the administration decided not to begin a sale of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve today. That would have sent a really bad market signal.’ The reserve, which currently holds 635 million barrels, should be held ‘for severe supply disruptions,’ Sommers said.” [The Washington Post, [3/10/20](https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/03/10/trump-oil-bailout/)]

### During Pandemic, Trump Secretary of State Mike Pompeo Said the U.S. Needed to End Reliance on China and Foreign Nations for Uranium and “Fundamentally Review” Supply Chains

**S&P: Trump Administration’s Effort to Expand Uranium Mining Was Stalled by COVID-19 Response, Frustrating U.S. Uranium Producers That Believed the Crisis May Exacerbate Fault Lines in the Supply Chain for Nuclear Powered Utilities.** “A Trump administration effort to expand the domestic sourcing of nuclear fuel is believed to be stalled amid the government response to the coronavirus pandemic, frustrating U.S. uranium producers that believe the crisis may exacerbate fault lines in the supply chain for nuclear-powered utilities. U.S. uranium producers have been waiting more than two years for relief from the White House. Two Colorado-based uranium miners, Energy Fuels Inc. and Ur-Energy Inc., petitioned the Commerce Department in January 2018 to launch a probe to determine if foreign uranium imports are a threat to national security. In July 2019, after the Commerce Department submitted its findings to the White House, President Donald Trump decided not to take up the recommendations and instead created a Nuclear Fuel Working Group to evaluate the security of the U.S. nuclear fuel supply chain. […] The delay in releasing recommendations is coloring the views of investors in U.S. uranium producers that have yet to see immediate relief under the Trump administration, said Mark Reichman, a senior natural resource analyst with Noble Capital Markets.” [S&P Global, [3/27/20](https://www.spglobal.com/marketintelligence/en/news-insights/latest-news-headlines/trump-effort-to-help-uranium-miners-sidelined-by-covid-19-producers-say-57759804)]

**Secretary of State Mike Pompeo Said the COVID-19 Pandemic Showed That the U.S. Needed to Stop Relying on Foreign Nations for Uranium; Pompeo Said “We Need to Fundamentally Review Our Supply Chains…”** “Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said today the novel coronavirus reveals why the United States needs to stop relying on China and other foreign nations for uranium and other minerals. ‘We need to fundamentally review our supply chains and make sure that we know those supply chains and have control over them for moments just like this,’ he said on conservative commentator Hugh Hewitt’s radio show this morning. Pompeo defended the Trump administration’s response to the pandemic, including his insistence on calling COVID-19 the ‘Wuhan virus’ despite condemnation from the rest of the Group of Seven of leading industrial nations. Hewitt asked about China’s dominance over supplies of nuclear fuel, citing concerns raised by Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette and Hewitt’s ‘friend’ Daniel Poneman, former deputy Energy secretary under President Obama. […] Pompeo called the problem ‘absolutely critical’ and added rare earth elements. China controls 80% of global supply of the 17 minerals increasingly used in new military and civilian technologies. He said businesses are now realizing the ‘political risk.’” [E&E News, [3/26/20](https://www.eenews.net/greenwire/2020/03/26/stories/1062708157)]

### Solar Energy Industries Association and American Wind Energy Association Lobbied Congress for Assistance

**Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) Rallied Members to Reach Out to Federal Legislators For Help Weathering Downturn Amid Coronavirus Pandemic.** “The Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) rallied its members on Friday to reach out to their federal legislators in support of policy that will help the sector weather the novel coronavirus pandemic and global economic downturn. The industry supports the extension of renewable tax credits and a bill that would enable low-cost loans for small businesses, including many SEIA members. The loans component, which the House of Representatives passed on March 6, is crucial to the industry association because of its smaller members, Shaun Garrison, SEIA director of congressional affairs, said.” [Utility Dive, [3/23/20](https://www.utilitydive.com/news/solar-developers-launch-lobbying-effort-to-curb-covid-19-impacts-advance-r/574651/)]

**American Wind Energy Association (AWEA) Appealed to Congress on Federal Production or Investment Tax Credits.** “AWEA in its appeal to Congress said that developers of wind energy projects have been moving forward ‘based on what appeared the safe assumption that their projects would qualify for the federal production or investment tax credits, which reduce costs to electricity consumers.’ With those tax credits expiring, delays in completing those projects could push them past deadlines to qualify for the credits. ‘There is a record amount of wind projects under development. Delays caused by COVID-19 will make it difficult for some U.S. wind projects to come online in time to meet financial and economic obligations, putting projects at risk of cancellation,’ said AWEA Vice President of Research and Analytics John Hensley. ‘Decisive government action in the short term can do much to soften the virus’ effects and protect the over 100,000 workers that count on the U.S. wind industry for their livelihood and the consumers that count on wind power for safe, low-cost, zero-carbon electricity.’” [Power[, 3/19/20](https://www.powermag.com/wind-energy-group-says-43-billion-at-risk-from-covid-19/)]

**SEIA and AWEA Sent Joint Letter to Congress Saying That Extending Tax Credits “would allow our member companies to hire thousands of additional workers and inject billions in the U.S. economy.”** “Two trade groups, the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) and American Wind Energy Association (AWEA), sent a joint letter to members of Congress last week saying that extending the credits ‘would allow our member companies to hire thousands of additional workers and inject billions in the U.S. economy.’ The share of solar and wind energy in the U.S. had been booming. But now, without help, the SEIA estimates the solar industry could see as much as 50 percent of residential solar jobs lost this year due to the pandemic. AWEA estimates $43 billion dollars of investments and payments, mostly in the rural communities where wind projects usually are built, is at risk. ‘The COVID-19 pandemic is harming the wind industry’s ability to build the wind farms envisioned by Congressional legislation and putting at risk 35,000 wind energy jobs,’ says Tom Kiernan, Chief Executive Officer of AWEA.” [NPR, [3/24/20](https://www.npr.org/2020/03/24/820268157/climate-change-push-fuels-split-on-coronavirus-stimulus)]