



GET MOVING WITH CLIMATE ACTION

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It is time to stop treating public health and environmental protection as a matter of partisan politics.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is not a birds and bunnies agency; it's a people agency dedicated to protecting the most vulnerable among us—many of whom are kids. The agency's job is to deliver clean air and drinking water, clean up contaminated places, ensure our rivers and streams are fishable and swimmable, and protect consumers from exposure to harmful chemicals like pesticides and toxics in products. That mission is now portrayed by many as partisan and no longer necessary or advisable to pursue.

People need to be protected from exposure to pollution whether they are Democrats or Republicans. Although I worked for President Barack Obama and I am a Democrat, I worked for six governors over the past 25 years and all but one was a Republican. And each one of them—regardless of party affiliation—took his or her obligation to protect this mission seriously and made progress in advancing public health and environmental protections, including former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, who approved the release of a statewide Climate Protection Plan.¹

Throughout our history, both Democrats and Republicans have understood that we fundamentally must protect people's right to live healthy lives. It was Republican President Theodore Roosevelt who established important national parks and signed the Antiquities Act into law.² Teddy would be rolling in his

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¹ Commonwealth of Massachusetts Office for Commonwealth Development, *Massachusetts Climate Protection Plan* (2004), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/health/documents/mass-climate-plan.pdf>.

² *Theodore Roosevelt and the National Park System*, U.S. NAT'L PARK SERV., <https://www.nps.gov/thrb/learn/historyculture/trandthenpsystem.htm>; 16 U.S.C. §§ 431-433 (1906).

grave if he knew that today, a President is seeking to reverse his decision to “permanently” protect land.

It pains me to think the current leadership at EPA views the agency and its career staff as threats rather than protectors of our fundamental right to live healthy, productive lives. It pains me that this Administration does not see pollution as a threat that if not properly regulated, would take away the rights of our people to pursue health and happiness. Regulations are tools to protect our freedom, not a threat to freedom.

Since 2017, the Trump Administration has focused its efforts on rolling back most of the environmental actions during the Obama Administration, including the Clean Water Rule, the Clean Power Plan, and the Paris Agreement.³ This Administration has even proposed to roll back clean car standards, which will weaken fuel efficiency requirements and increase greenhouse gas emissions that fuel climate change.⁴ Once the dust settles from the ensuing litigation over this rollback, such action will likely result in a return of differing standards across the United States as opposed to one national program favored by auto manufacturers.⁵ In fact, Ford Motor Company officials stated they did not want the federal standards weakened; they simply wanted EPA to consider tweaks to the incentive system in the current rule.⁶

Just because we cannot visibly see carbon pollution emissions that fuel climate change in the same way we can see conventional air pollution like smog and soot, that does not mean carbon pollution isn’t changing our climate. Climate change is real, and manmade emissions are responsible. And it isn’t just impacting polar bears and coastal areas. Climate change is threatening the health and well-being of all of us—even if the science is complicated and hard to communicate.

President Obama often said that the strongest economy in the world will be the one that wins the race to a clean energy economy.⁷ Regulations that drive reasonable, cost-effective reductions in carbon pollution send necessary signals to investors and innovators and are engines for continued

³ See EPA and Army Finalize “Waters of the United States” Applicability Date, U.S. ENV’T PROT. AGENCY (Jan. 31, 2018), <https://archive.epa.gov/epa/newsreleases/epa-and-army-finalize-waters-united-states-applicability-date.html>; *Electric Utility Generating Units: Repealing the Clean Power Plan: Proposal*, ENV’T PROT. AGENCY, <https://www.epa.gov/stationary-sources-air-pollution/electric-utility-generating-units-repealing-clean-power-plan-0>; *Statement by President Trump on the Paris Climate Accord*, THE WHITE HOUSE (June 1, 2017), <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/statement-president-trump-paris-climate-accord/>.

⁴ *The Safer Affordable Fuel Efficient (SAFE) Vehicles Proposed Rule for Model Years 2021-2026*, ENV’T PROT. AGENCY, <https://www.epa.gov/regulations-emissions-vehicles-and-engines/safer-affordable-fuel-efficient-safe-vehicles-proposed>.

⁵ Bob Egelko, *Trump Attack on California’s Emission Standards Faces Legal Battle*, S.F. CHRON., Aug. 2, 2018, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/news/article/Trump-attack-of-Ca-s-emission-standards-faces-13128243.php>.

⁶ Bill Ford & Jim Hackett, *A Measure of Progress*, MEDIUM (Mar. 27, 2018), <https://medium.com/cityoftomorrow/a-measure-of-progress-bc34ad2b0ed>.

⁷ *Playing to Win: The Global Clean Energy Race*, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/clean_energy_report_vpotus.pdf.

job growth. This Administration's proposed rollbacks and attempts to reinvigorate coal as an energy source send all the wrong signals and defer U.S. leadership and jobs to other countries who choose to lead on clean energy.⁸

But it's important for all of us to step back and recognize that it takes a final rule to get rid of a final rule, and this Administration has a long way to go to finalize and defend any rollback in court.⁹ And I, for one, am confident that Obama-era rules followed the law and benefitted from solid science and strong records. Although a Rose Garden announcement of the United States pulling out of the Paris Agreement made for high TV ratings, the United States cannot withdraw from the Agreement until after the next presidential election.¹⁰

It's also worth noting that even when the federal government goes to sleep, all is not lost. We don't have to put our heads down and give up on the environmental progress we have made or our commitment to a healthy, safe, equitable, low-carbon future. Now is not the time to sit around and watch Netflix, eat ice cream, and watch seven years of *Game of Thrones*. I tried it; it is very exciting—for a while. But then you have to get up and move on.

In the absence of federal leadership, history tells us that states and cities step up—and that's just what is happening today. America is still in! The clean energy train has left the station and it's not turning back. States—even some that sued EPA over the Clean Power Plan—are on track to beat the goals set in the rule by leaps and bounds.¹¹ Why? Because clean renewable energy is winning in the marketplace and saving consumers money.

So, my message to you is this: Stop moping. Do not let anybody think that the United States is out of the game. We continue to move forward on clean energy, whether it is in the power or transportation sector. We have a path forward, defined by smart, dedicated human beings who care about the public health and the future of our country and our world.

For now, states, cities, and businesses have a wonderful opportunity to stop waiting for the federal government and, instead, rely on their own ingenuity and the wisdom of the collective voices of American families who remain committed to the health and well-being of our children and our collective future if our leaders fail to act.

Let me end by paraphrasing something my dad used to tell me when I whined as a child: Pull up your big-girl pants, pull up your big-boy pants, pull up your gender-neutral pants, and get moving!

⁸ Avery Anapol, *Trump Considering Emergency Authority to Boost Coal*, THE HILL, June 1, 2018, <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/390201-trump-administration-to-use-emergency-authority-to-boost-coal>.

⁹ 5 U.S.C. § 551 (2011).

¹⁰ Michael D. Shear, *Trump Will Withdraw U.S. From Paris Climate Agreement*, N.Y. TIMES, June 1, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/01/climate/trump-paris-climate-agreement.html>.

¹¹ Brad Plumer & Nadja Popovich, *How Will the Clean Power Plan Repeal Change Carbon Emissions for Your State?*, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 10, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/10/10/climate/clean-power-plan-emissions-your-state.html>.