

Trump's EPA budget cuts: What's at stake for African American communities?

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has worked to protect our health for more than four decades, cleaning our air, water, and land.

Deep budget cuts [proposed](#) by the Trump administration for the second year in a row would jeopardize Americans' health and safety, reducing funds needed to address pollution from lead, clean up toxic sites, ensure access to clean water, and much more.

If the President succeeds in his plan to cut EPA's budget by over 20 percent, the result will be more asthma attacks among children, more toxic pollution in our communities, and more lead in our drinking water.

What benefits are at risk from EPA budget cuts?

Clean air

- **The lives of up to 45,000 Americans are saved every year** by EPA programs cutting [air pollution that crosses state lines](#) and [toxic mercury](#).
- Over 24 million Americans have been [diagnosed with asthma](#), including almost 4 million African-Americans.
- Asthma attacks were the cause of [688,000 pediatric emergency room visits and over \\$53 billion in associated medicals costs](#) in America in 2008.
- have [nearly double](#) the rates of current asthma prevalence as white children. Incidences of asthma-related hospitalization or death are also [higher among African-Americans](#).
- EPA grants cover almost 30% of state and local air quality monitoring. **Almost a third** of those EPA grants would disappear under the Trump budget.
- EPA protections help reduce the occurrence of "code red" days – when air pollution is so bad that children and seniors are advised not to spend time outside.
- Programs to monitor and cut air pollution are especially important for African-Americans in the U.S., since [68 percent of African-Americans](#) live within 30 miles of a coal-fired power plant and more than [72 percent of African Americans](#) live in counties that fail to meet one or more of EPA's federal air quality standards. More than [1.8 million African-Americans](#) also live within 2 miles of one or more hazardous waste facilities.
- Exposure to toxic chemicals and smog-forming ozone puts these residents at a higher risk for asthma attacks and other illnesses.



A hazy Los Angeles in December 1948 before the EPA was established and the Clean Air Act was passed.

What benefits are at risk from EPA budget cuts?

Clean water

- **124.4 million Americans, including over 23 million people** in the 10 states with the highest proportion of African-Americans, rely on headwater, rain-fed, and seasonal streams for their **drinking water**.
- EPA helps deal with **“runoff” pollution** that drains into our waterways – including excess fertilizers and insecticides, grease and toxic chemicals from urban streets and energy production, acid drainage from abandoned mines, and bacteria and nutrients from livestock, pet wastes and faulty septic systems –. **EPA provided states with \$170.9 million to help protect America’s water in FY 2017, a program Trump’s budget proposes to zero out.**
- In 2017, EPA awarded more than **\$9 million in grants to help states** monitor recreational beaches for pollution and to support programs that alert the public when high bacteria levels put beachgoers at risk for gastrointestinal illness, eye, ear and nose infections, skin rashes and infections, and worse.
- Regional restoration projects in the Chesapeake Bay, the Great Lakes, and the Puget Sound keep interstate waters clean and protect local marine economies. These programs **would face severe cuts or elimination under Trump’s budget**, leaving states without critical funding to protect their waters and public health.



Industrial waste discharged to Cuyahoga River, Ohio, 1973

“The [EPA budget cuts] will be felt by communities across the country and minority, low-income, and other vulnerable communities will be hit particularly hard.”

–Letter from 46 Congressmen

Toxic lead

- There is no safe level of lead, a known neurotoxin that damages children’s IQs for their entire lives.
- Over the past five decades, EPA has worked to reduce or eliminate the use of lead in gasoline, paint, plumbing pipes, and soil. The results: blood lead levels across the country have **declined more than 90%** since the mid-1970s.

But more needs to be done: More than half a million kids in Flint, Michigan and across the U.S., a disproportionate number of whom are poor, have elevated levels of lead in their blood, primarily from lead paint and pipes. Amongst African American children, **11% have reported lead poisoning compared to 2% of their white counterparts**. **The Trump budget would slash programs that can help these children.**

“The Trump administration’s dismantling of environmental regulations has intensified a growing civil rights battle over the deadly burden of pollution on minorities and low-income people.”

- Headline in *The Guardian*, November 20, 2017

What benefits are at risk from EPA budget cuts?

Environmental justice

- **Trump’s budget would slash the budget for EPA’s Office of Environmental Justice** by more than two-thirds, a department dedicated to the “fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.”
- The Office of Environmental Justice provides information and resources to help communities, many of which are predominantly Latino and African-American, improve understanding and build capacity to effectively participate in local decision-making regarding their health and surroundings. **“The public health outcomes as a result of pollution are disproportionately worse for people of color.”**
—Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, in *The Hill*, February 23, 2018
- The Environmental Justice Small Grants Program, which provides support to community organizations and tribal groups to address environmental issues in their communities, has [provided](#) over \$24 million in funding to over 1,400 projects nationwide since 1994. Recent Environmental Justice grants have funded the establishment of a green infrastructure job-training program and provided support for air quality training in predominantly African-American neighborhoods in southeast Washington D.C. and Port Arthur, Texas. The drastic cut to this office also reverses a strategy finalized in 2016 known as [EJ 2020](#). This four-year plan focuses on increasingly embedding environmental justice concerns across all EPA programs, expanding relationships with overburdened communities to boost positive results, and deepening efforts to address lead poisoning, air pollution, and other problems suffered by communities who live near waste treatment plants, and other sources of toxins.

Toxic-free communities

- In communities across the U.S., families are threatened by industrial hazardous waste, radioactive materials, and toxic chemicals such as lead, asbestos, and dioxin—causing cancer, reproductive harm, and other damaging health impacts.
- Contaminated land and water also imposes economic burdens and hardships on communities. Abandoned industrial pollution sites sink real estate values, discourage investment, and undermine the efforts of local communities to re-develop and revitalize their economies.
- **Despite calling Superfund cleanups a priority, the Trump/Pruitt FY19 budget calls for a six percent cut in spending on Superfund levels compared with the last year of the Obama administration.**
- **There are more than 1,700 sites on a list of the most highly polluted properties nationwide, known as [Superfund sites](#).** In addition, there are more than 450,000 brownfields sites, which may be less hazardous, but are still sufficiently contaminated to require clean-up before the property can be reused. Populations that are minorities, low-income, linguistically isolated, and less educated are [more likely](#) to [live near](#) these sites than the U.S. population as a whole.

“In 46 states, people of color deal with more air pollution than white people do, [EPA] study finds”

- Headline in *Buzzfeed*, February 22, 2018

EPA budget cuts impact in the states with highest proportions of African Americans

	Mississippi	Louisiana	Georgia	Maryland	South Carolina	Alabama	North Carolina
Clean air							
Adults with asthma	65,043	219,602	451,848	379,403	207,986	226,882	438,984
Kids with asthma	24,398	73,190	177,790	120,537	62,830	90,161	184,962
Pediatric emergency room visits due to asthma	7,146	10,326	23,754	12,494	9,937	10,455	20,910
Estimated incremental direct cost of asthma	\$455 million	\$744.8 million	\$1.7 billion	\$1.06 billion	\$769.4 million	\$768.7 million	\$1.5 billion
Lives saved every year by EPA Mercury (MATS) and Cross State Air Pollution rules	811	811	1,995	1,223	1,293	1,343	2,195
Clean water							
State residents relying on surface waters for drinking	111,041	1.9 million	4.9 million	3.9 million	1.9 million	2.7 million	4.7 million
FY2016 EPA funding for state to deal with runoff pollution	\$2.98 million	\$3.78 million	\$3.63 million	\$2.07 million	\$2.43 million	\$3.05 million	\$3.32 million
Toxic sites							
Brownfields sites	341	400	371	229	338	269	756
Superfund sites	14	28	22	25	32	17	42