

## Pruitt and his allies want to slash EPA's ability to hold polluters accountable

Scientists and everyone else know that certain chemicals in everyday products are linked to cancer. EPA plays a critical role in enforcing laws that protect the public health from chemicals and other threats, and its job is to hold polluters accountable. But its enforcement efforts have been stretched thin by years of budget cuts, which makes it difficult for the agency to prosecute polluters who flout laws across the country.

**Pruitt is already showing he's relaxing enforcement: in FY17, polluters were fined only one-fifth the total collected the year before.**

The Trump Administration is now proposing to further slash the budget EPA needs to enforce the nation's bedrock environmental laws, which are supposed to limit the pollutants in our water, air and soil and keep our communities safe. One former EPA enforcement chief calls EPA Administrator Pruitt's budget plan "a pretty crass effort to take the heat off some of the biggest polluters in the US."

### **EPA protects public health by holding polluters accountable.**

**Enforcement can save lives:** Environmental protections cut pollution that threatens America's children. [Studies](#) confirm that hundreds of thousands of lives have been saved because of Clean Air Act programs. Our nation's environmental laws also save us billions of dollars in lower medical bills. But without aggressive enforcement of these laws, our families face more asthma attacks, more cancer, and more premature deaths.

**Polluter violations can be egregious:** For example, [Volkswagen](#) rigged cars to cheat on air pollution tests. When EPA cracked down, the company paid \$4.3 billion in penalties, agreed to spend more than \$10 billion to fix and buy back cars, and invested nearly \$5 billion on environmental projects.

Other important enforcement cases [include](#) cracking down on people and businesses who endanger public health by selling dangerously contaminated oil for re-use, using hazardous pesticides inside nursing homes, illegally removing dangerous asbestos, dumping sludge into storm drains, releasing dangerous chemicals into the air, dumping oil and hazardous waste into the ocean, and more.

**EPA holds polluters accountable:** EPA officials work with the Justice Department to investigate violations and oversee settlements with polluters that eliminate public health risks and address the harm caused by pollution. The EPA enforces important laws passed by Congress like the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, Superfund and Brownfield programs, as well as laws and rules protecting people from toxic and hazardous waste.

EPA [National Enforcement Initiatives](#) target major sources of air pollution, hazardous chemicals and mine waste, hazardous releases at industrial and chemical facilities, and contamination of waters by raw sewage, animal waste and industrial pollutants. EPA enforcement has [held polluters accountable](#). From October 1998 to September 2014, EPA's work helped the Justice Department conclude criminal cases against more than 1,000 people and more than 400 corporations. This resulted in \$825 million in combined criminal fines and restitution and 774 years of incarceration.

"Environmental crime is the largest area of corporate criminal activity." ---David Uhlmann, former Chief, Justice Department Environmental Crimes Section.

## EPA's enforcement resources are already stretched thin

**The law requires at least 200 EPA investigators, but EPA has even less:** The Pollution Prevention Act of 1990 requires EPA to have at least 200 criminal investigators. Far more are needed for EPA to adequately investigate and deter criminal activity, but there are currently fewer than 150. One third of the U.S. has no criminal investigators, and another third has one investigator for the whole state. That means EPA is woefully understaffed in over 30 states, and pollution violators are more likely to get off the hook.

## States don't have the resources to fill the gap

Most states don't have the legal and investigative resources and expertise to keep up with environmental hazards and crimes and to join in multi-state cases that typically make up the biggest part of EPA's docket. Proposed cuts to other EPA programs, including Superfund, that help states will further sap state resources that could be devoted to enforcement.

"A lot of that money goes for litigation and for abandoned sites...so the chances of them [with such diminished funding] pursuing lawsuits against responsible parties are pretty slim" [noted](#) Lois Gibbs, founder and executive director of the Center for Health, Environment and Justice.

## Trump and Pruitt are trying to further slash EPA's enforcement capacity

By slashing EPA funding back to 1970s levels and **cutting FY19 EPA enforcement funding by 12 percent**, the Administration is trying to reduce EPA enforcement capacity further. These cuts would undermine a tradition of Republican and Democratic administrations enforcing the environmental laws.

**Administrator Pruitt is cozy with those he should be overseeing:** Scott Pruitt has stocked the agency with political appointees who have been on the other side of the enforcement table – representing industry polluters in investigations and litigation.

"What we are looking at is a pretty crass effort to take the heat off some of the biggest polluters in the US, and that's being done with EPA's collusion."--Eric Schaeffer, Former Director of the EPA Office of Regulatory Enforcement

## Proposed FY19 cuts to EPA enforcement efforts:

Program	Trump administration budget proposal
Science and Technology, enforcement	-22.8%
Environmental Programs and Management, enforcement	-17.5%
Environmental Justice, enforcement	-70.1%
Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) Trust Fund, enforcement	-4.4%
Hazardous Substance Superfund, enforcement	-0.3%