

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

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has worked to protect human health and the environment for more than four decades, cleaning our air, water, and land. During that time, our air and water have become cleaner, despite a growing economy and an expanding population, with millions more cars on the road.

Now, however, President Trump is proposing deep budget cuts that jeopardize EPA's ability to protect Americans' health and safety. His budget would slash funds—including [\\$666.2 million in EPA grants has been sending directly to states](#)—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 almost a third, 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 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.
- [African-American children have the highest rate of asthma](#) among all racial groups, at 13.5%. 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 3 kilometers 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 protections 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 surface waters for their drinking water.**
- EPA helps deal with “[runoff](#)” [pollution](#) – including excess fertilizers and insecticides from agricultural lands, oil 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 – that drains into our waterways. **EPA provided states with \$163.4 million to help protect America’s water in FY 2016, a program Trump’s budget proposes to zero out.**
- In 2016, 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 Puget Sound keep interstate waters clean and protect local marine economies. These programs [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

Declining lead levels

- 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 the U.S. today, a disproportionate number of whom are poor, have elevated levels of lead in their blood, primarily from lead paint and pipes. Among African American children, [11% have reported lead poisoning compared with 2% of their white counterparts](#). **The Trump budget would slash programs that can help these children.**

“President Trump’s proposed budget aims squarely at... weakening needed protections from pollution that threatens our health”

– Gina McCarthy, Former EPA Administrator in *The Hill*, June 5th, 2017

What benefits are at risk from EPA budget cuts?

Environmental Justice

- **Trump’s budget would shut down EPA’s Office of Environmental Justice, 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.”**
“EPA cuts will hit black and Hispanic communities the hardest”
- Headline in *The Guardian*, March 3, 2017
- 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 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 closing of 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 located near waste treatment plants, and other sources of toxins.

“High-ranking EPA employee resigns in protest of President Trump's looming budget cuts.”
- Headline in *New York Daily News*, March 9, 2017

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 impose 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.
- **There are more than 1,330 sites on a list of the most highly polluted properties nationwide, known as [Superfund sites](#).** In addition, there are more than 450,000 brownfield 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.
- **Yet the Trump administration is proposing to slash the Superfund program by a third, and the Brownfields program by more than 20%.** With communities and states fighting to protect their families and re-develop their economies, this is no time to slash EPA’s hazardous waste clean-up programs.

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

	Mississippi	Louisiana	Georgia	Maryland	South Carolina	Alabama	North Carolina
Clean air							
Adults with asthma	166,117	270,261	636,931	393,571	309,409	353,847	592,279
Kids with asthma	72,177	104,304	239,936	126,197	100,371	105,609	211,215
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	\$3.02 million	\$3.8 million	\$3.7 million	\$2.1 million	\$2.5 million	\$3.05 million	\$3.7 million
Toxic sites							
Brownfield sites	321	390	368	229	310	258	744
Superfund sites	12	27	22	25	35	18	46