

“Job-killing regulations” is a longtime conservative meme. That attack has now been joined by the claim that major new spending for clean energy is overheating the economy. The inflation claim is new, prompted by the passage of the 2021 Infrastructure law and the 2022 IRA. And if they *were* both right, the two problems would be offsetting. In fact, we might need *even stricter* environmental regulations to help cool the economy and cut inflation.

There's never been real [evidence](#) for the job-killing claim, but it remains very much alive. The National Association of Manufacturers recently [claimed](#) that new regulations to cut air pollution would “threaten \$162.4 billion to \$197.4 billion of economic activity and put 852,100 to 973,900 current jobs at risk, both directly from manufacturing and indirectly from supply chain spending.” Specifically, “the proposed rule would put at risk approximately \$138.4 billion of gross value added (in 2021 prices) and 501,000 jobs in 2027 in areas of nonattainment.” (I can't help but note the sly wording: “put at risk” means only that there *might* be an impact of some kind, not that all of the harm would actually occur.)

Although “job killing” seems to be a constant refrain, the inflationary claim tends to surface only when inflation itself is a problem. Fifty years ago Nixon vetoed major spending for municipal sewage treatment as inflationary. The issue disappeared for many years until inflation once again reared its ugly head after COVID. But now it's definitely back. The *Wall Street Journal* [said](#) beforehand that the infrastructure bill would fuel inflation. Republicans [warned](#) that “Congress must stop fueling inflation and stop throwing endless amounts of money at problems; it must carefully target where to spend Americans' hard-earned tax dollars.” And Fox Business [complained](#) that the infrastructure bill and the IRA “juiced demand in the U.S. and contributed to inflation levels that haven't been seen in decades.”

If they're right and these spending bills are fueling inflation, it is by increasing demand. Overheating the economy means that supply is racing to catch up to demand, and that means hiring more workers, thus driving up employment and wages. So if the IRA and the infrastructure bill are inflationary, that means they are actually creating too many jobs, which is leading to wage increases.

Assume that both claims are right. If the IRA and the infrastructure law are supposedly creating too many jobs, we need to counter that inflationary effect. If Republicans are right, what we need right now to help cool off the economy is to offset the inflationary effects of spending on clean energy. And if their theory about the impact of regulations on jobs is right, stronger environmental regulations would actually be a good way of pouring some cold water on an overstimulated economy.

Obviously, I'm overthinking things a bit. We're not really supposed to take the logic of these claims that seriously. Regardless of the state of the economy, conservatives favor the same remedies: cutting spending and taxes while slashing environmental protection. If the economy is down, this is supposed to be create jobs. If the economy is up, it's the recipe for preventing inflation.

Anything else would be "woke."