



Photo: U.S. EPA

In what is one of the most mind-boggling [press releases](#) ever to come out of the Environmental Protection Agency, Administrator Lee Zeldin today declared that he wants to make America's air and water dirty again and to make the planet still warmer. He announced 31 actions that will obliterate protections for cleaner air, cleaner water, and a more stable climate.

Each of the regulations Zeldin is seeking to roll back is worthy of a separate blog post. Each tackles a major air, water, or climate pollution problem: cross state air pollution; radiation from coal ash (more toxic than nuclear waste); hazardous air pollutants emitted from chemical plants, including ethylene oxide and chloroprene; fine particulate matter; mercury and other hazardous pollutants from coal fired power plants; wastewater pollution from coal fired power plants; potential chemical releases from industrial plants in the event of disasters like hurricanes and flooding; pollution from oil and gas facilities, including methane; and pollution from cars and trucks, to name a number of them. He has also shuttered all of EPA's regional offices focused on environmental justice and cut grants to help disadvantaged communities adapt to climate change.

And buried within the list of 31 is a huge bombshell: the "reconsideration" of EPA's finding that greenhouse gases endanger public health and welfare under the Clean Air Act. That finding forms the basis for virtually all of EPA's regulations cutting greenhouse gases, including from the power sector, from oil and gas facilities, and from cars and trucks (for a

more thorough explanation of what reversing the endangerment finding means, see my post [here](#)). Apparently, EPA is ready to buck the scientific consensus that greenhouse gases are warming the planet despite evidence on the ground almost every day that climate change is wreaking havoc on our planet through increased flooding, hurricanes, droughts, heat waves, and water shortages.

Before joining EPA, Lee Zeldin was apparently a moderate-ish Republican member of Congress, even [joining](#) the “climate solutions caucus.” He has very quickly and dramatically morphed into the dream boy of climate deniers like [Myron Ebell](#), and of right-wing organizations like the Competitive Enterprise Institute and the [Heartland Institute](#). It is hard to imagine a more wholesale attack on environmental protection than what he announced today. The press release’s headline is deadly accurate: “EPA Launches Biggest Deregulatory Action in U.S. History.”

Many questions remain, of course. How will Zeldin scientifically support all of these rollbacks, which all have impressive scientific findings supporting them? How will he actually do the work necessary to roll back the regulations? This question is especially pertinent in light of his announcement that he intends to cut two-thirds of EPA’s staff or funding. Who will do the work? Outside consultants beholden to the industries covered by the regulations? Will Zeldin follow required administrative procedures to undo the regulations? Will courts uphold these attacks, especially in the face of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Loper Bright v. Raimundo* holding that administrative agencies are not entitled to deference in their interpretation of the statutes they administer?

The statutes Zeldin is tasked with administering are not designed to be deregulatory. They are designed to regulate, to make our air and our water cleaner, to protect public health, and to prevent the planet from warming still further. Today is a shameful day for environmental protection.