

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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August 19, 2025

The Honorable Lee Zeldin
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Re: Comment opposing proposed rule, “Reconsideration of 2009 Endangerment Finding and Greenhouse Gas Vehicle Standards”

Docket ID: EPA-HQ-OAR-2025-0194

Dear Administrator Zeldin:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) to register our strong opposition to the Agency’s proposed rule that would remove its ability to effectively regulate greenhouse gases. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with more than 42,000 current members across the country, including members in all 50 states and in the District of Columbia. FFRF protects the constitutional separation between state and church, and educates the public about matters related to nontheism.

Revoking the EPA’s 2009 Endangerment Finding would be disastrous for Americans and their health. It would also be disastrous for the inheritance of our descendants and future generations. It would strip the agency of its authority to address a crisis that climate scientists overwhelmingly agree is real, human-caused and catastrophic for public health and welfare. The Environmental Protection Agency must live up to its name by regulating factors that contribute to climate change, including greenhouse gas emissions. Instead, the proposed rule flouts this responsibility and sidelines science in favor of corporate profits.

This proposed rule is directly in line with the Christian nationalist, anti-science agenda of Project 2025.¹ One of our country’s most fundamental founding principles is the separation between state and church, demanding that public policy be based on real-world evidence, not on personal religious beliefs. Adopting Project 2025’s agenda betrays this fundamental principle.

¹ <https://cesp.gmu.edu/review-of-project-2025s-chapter-on-the-environmental-protection-agency/>

The so-called “Nones,” the religiously unaffiliated, care about this, our only world. The only afterlife that should concern us is leaving our descendants and planet a secure and pleasant future, as FFRF co-president Annie Laurie Gaylor has said. While many Americans turn a blind eye to the climate change crisis, a Pew Research poll showed that 90 percent of atheists² — the highest percentage of any group by religion (or lack thereof) to do so — believe the data and acknowledge the reality of climate change. In contrast, while even a preponderance of white evangelical Protestants accept at least some of the science, this group accounts for the most climate change deniers.³ It is no surprise that Project 2025 seeks to kill the Inflation Reduction Act, which is keeping our nation on its path to meet its global commitments and protect the future of our children and grandchildren.

FFRF objects to the proposed rule’s nonsensical interpretation of Section 202(a) of the Clean Air Act, which allows the EPA to regulate emissions from new motor vehicles or engines that “cause or contribute to . . . air pollution which endangers the health or welfare of any persons.” The proposed rule excludes air pollutants that endanger people “only indirectly.” This interpretation is **directly at odds with the plain language** of the statute, which includes pollutants that “contribute to” air pollution.

In fact, the proposed rule complains that a prior EPA Administrator found that new motor vehicle engine emissions “contribute to the air pollution” when those emissions consisted of six “well-mixed” greenhouse gases previously identified as a danger to public health or welfare. *See* 74 FR 66537-39. Greenhouse gases are not like a Long Island Iced Tea, where a “well-mixed” combination of unpalatable ingredients produces a pleasant result. As the EPA’s own website⁴ confirms, greenhouse gases thicken “the Earth’s atmospheric blanket” no matter how well mixed they are.

The proposed rule cites the Department of Energy’s dubious April CWG Draft Report⁵ to justify its departure from reality. That Draft Report bizarrely suggests that elevated levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide are *not* a threat to societal well-being, and offers by way of example that the “recent rebound of the Great Barrier Reef suggests” that longstanding scientific consensus on the topic may be wrong. However, just in the last

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<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/11/17/religious-groups-views-on-climate-change/#:~:text=Nine%2Din%2Dten%20atheists%20say,mostly%20because%20of%20human%20activity>

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<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/11/17/religious-groups-views-on-climate-change/#:~:text=Nine%2Din%2Dten%20atheists%20say,mostly%20because%20of%20human%20activity>

⁴ <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/overview-greenhouse-gases>

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<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/08/01/2025-14519/notice-of-availability-a-critical-review-of-impacts-of-greenhouse-gas-emissions-on-the-us-climate>

two weeks a new report showed⁶ that the Great Barrier Reef suffered “the largest annual decline in coral cover since records began nearly 40 years ago.”

This is why regulatory decisions must rest on peer-reviewed science, not cherry-picked anecdotes that can’t hold up to scrutiny. Instead of relying on such unscientific sources, the EPA should listen to the consensus of the climate scientists whom the current administration dismissed from the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC) and Science Advisory Board (SAB).

The Agency specifically asked for comments “on whether regulated parties and other stakeholders have significant reliance interests in GHG emission standards for new motor vehicles and engines.” Nonreligious Americans, who now make up a third of the U.S. adult population⁷ — and all Americans — **have a profound reliance on the EPA’s regulation of greenhouse gas emissions.** The proposed refusal to regulate new motor vehicles and engines abandons the EPA’s core mission and puts public health and⁸ well-being at risk.

Finally, the proposed rule would rescind prior denials of petitions for reconsideration of the Endangerment Finding “**for the sake of consistency and to ameliorate potential confusion.**” But there is a better way to achieve these objectives: Rely on climate scientists rather than on anti-science ideologues. That would produce true consistency, while protecting both the Clean Air Act and the climate it’s meant to safeguard.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,



Ryan D. Jayne
Senior Policy Counsel

⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cvg3pp52m65o>

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<https://www.npr.org/2025/02/26/nx-s1-5298180/christianity-declines-among-u-s-adults-while-religiously-unaffiliated-grows-study-says#:~:text=Pew%20also%20found%20that%20nearly.unaffiliated%20than%20are%20older%20adults.>

⁸ See, e.g., 87 FR 25412 (Apr. 29, 2022).