

President's Proposed Budget Cuts Would Cripple State Environmental Protection

The Trump administration claims that one of its top goals is to promote “more effective partnerships” between EPA and the states in protecting our nation’s environment. But EPA’s proposed [FY2021 budget](#) actually cuts funding for that purpose by 25%, including an 85% cut in funding to “increase transparency and public participation.” Overall, proposed funding for the states is far worse; the budget calls for a cut of more than \$1.5 billion in support for state environmental protection. It is hard to see how such massive cuts will make states into more effective partners in managing our environment.

Helping states protect the people’s health and the environment is important. Under our federal system, states are the first line of defense against air, water, waste and other pollution affecting their residents, and do much of the work to address such pollution. Many federal environmental laws treat EPA and the states as partners, with EPA generally establishing national standards to ensure clean air, water and land, and states having the primary role in implementing those standards through such measures as issuing permits, carrying out inspections, and enforcing laws and regulations.

From its beginning, the Trump administration has loudly announced its desire to reduce the federal role in environmental protection and shift power to the states to allow them to take a larger share of the responsibility for protecting our country’s environment. Yet, the administration’s proposed 2021 budget delivers a triple blow to state protection measures: \$471 million in cuts to categorical grants to support state environmental protection programs; cuts of \$893 million in support for infrastructure for clean and safe water; and a \$180 million cut to support for joint federal and state efforts to protect our nation’s great water bodies. The total carnage is \$1.54 billion.

Cuts to Support State Environmental Protection Programs - 44%

A centerpiece of EPA’s budget proposal is a cut of more than \$470 million in funding for categorical grants to support state and tribal programs. These cuts would shrink resources to develop and manage environmental programs; tailor implementation to local needs; respond to emergencies like hurricanes, floods and severe storms; clean up contaminated sites; and take other measures to protect public health and the environment. The cuts are as indiscriminate as they are massive:

- \$88 million (35%) for air and radiation
- \$46 million (32%) for hazardous waste
- \$23 million (41%) for pesticides and toxics
- \$32 million (34%) for multi-media grants, primarily general assistance grants to enable Indian tribes to develop reservation environmental protection programs

Compounding the impact of these cuts, states depend on EPA financial support for more than 25% of their environmental program budgets, as [reported](#) by the Environmental Council of the States. And state environmental programs have been facing resource challenges over the last decade. [According to the Environmental Integrity Project](#), 40 states have eliminated 5,700 environmental jobs; over half the states have cut their environmental program budgets, with a third cutting more than 20% and the hardest-hit losing a third of their funding. Thus, EPA proposes to target state agencies with a cut of half a billion dollars in support for state programs when they are already reeling from past cuts.

States need EPA support more than ever just to carry out their essential functions. These cuts would gravely weaken state environmental agencies and the partnerships between EPA and state agencies that form cornerstones of the nation's system of environmental protection. Combining such reductions with increasing state responsibilities, as EPA is also proposing, will cripple state programs, setting them up for failure and reducing environmental protection for everyone.

Biggest State Cuts - Support for Water Protection

The budget candidly admits it would cut “**\$1.391,868**” billion from support for “clean and safe water,” supposedly a central agency goal.

Proposed Cuts for State Programs that Protect Water Quality

As noted above, the budget proposes cutting support for **state water protection programs by \$282 million:**

- \$70 million in cuts to state water pollution grants to help states protect and restore water quality by issuing permits, monitoring water quality, developing water quality standards, conducting cleanup plans, identifying violators and taking enforcement actions
- \$172 million in cuts by eliminating grants for nonpoint source management to address the largest remaining source of unregulated pollutants, such as contaminated runoff from a wide variety of sources. Nonpoint source pollution has been identified as a source of impairment for more than 80% of the nation's impaired rivers, streams, lakes, and reservoirs.
- Elimination of state categorical grants to protect water quality at beaches, previously funded at \$9.2 million
- \$41.5 million in cuts to state drinking water protection programs used to supervise public drinking water supplies and protect underground sources of drinking water.

Proposed Cuts in Support for Water Infrastructure

The largest share of the proposed cuts, \$893 million, is to infrastructure programs that protect and improve sanitation and water treatment and distribution systems.

The cuts include **\$782 million** to a pair of highly successful state revolving loan funds under the Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water Acts that support critical water and wastewater treatment infrastructure

projects. The proposal cuts \$263 million (23%) from drinking water and \$519 million (32%) from the clean water fund, with each state cut by a proportionate share.

The two programs are widely and justly lauded for producing enormous improvements in water infrastructure—in one recent year, the drinking water fund alone touched the lives of nearly 78 million people. Even today, they remain critical to ensuring clean and safe water. The evidence of the need for more investment in water infrastructure is overwhelming, and shows that this is a time to increase, not cut these funds:

- More than 27 million Americans are served by 3,500 community water systems that do not fully meet health-based drinking water standards, and some of those standards are dated and may not be adequately protective.
- Tens of thousands of homes lack access to basic sanitation and drinking water, sometimes including flushing toilets and running water, exposing people to raw sewage and drinking water contaminants.
- Many community water systems draw their water from rivers and lakes, but nearly half a million square miles of those waters are listed as “impaired,” which means they fail to meet one or more standards for water quality, and the list is growing each year.
- An overwhelming majority, 215 million of our nation’s people, live within two miles of a polluted lake, river, stream, or ocean area.
- Billions of gallons of raw sewage is discharged into local surface waters annually from combined sewer systems that carry wastewater from buildings and stormwater from street drains.
- Each year our country suffers about 240,000 water main breaks, wasting over two trillion gallons of treated drinking water.
- EPA’s most recent drinking water needs assessment estimated that more than \$472 billion will be needed to maintain and improve the nation’s drinking water infrastructure over the next 20 years.

But the water infrastructure cuts don’t stop at the state revolving loan funds, because the budget cuts another \$111 million in support for water infrastructure:

- \$51 million (96%) in cuts for basic drinking water and sanitation infrastructure improvements, like flushing toilets and running water for poor, isolated Alaska Native villages and U.S. communities along the U.S.-Mexico border that disproportionately lack such services and face exposure to raw sewage
- \$35 million (58%) in cuts to support for water quality protection under the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Fund
- \$25 million cut by *eliminating* funding to assist public water systems in small and disadvantaged communities under the Safe Water for Small and Disadvantaged Communities program.

Proposed Cuts to Protect and Restore our Nation’s Great Water Bodies - \$180 Million

America’s majestic waters are national treasures and part of our national identity, but the health of these ecosystems is threatened by pollution from a variety of sources. EPA geographic programs have provided federal leadership in cooperative efforts by states, tribes, and local governments to address the complex problems of protecting and restoring nationally significant waters. The budget proposes to cut more than \$180 million from this program, leaving the bill to the states. It eliminates any funding for vital water bodies such as **Puget Sound, Long Island Sound, the Gulf of Mexico, San Francisco Bay, South New**

England Estuary, and Lake Champlain. Even protection for the **Chesapeake Bay**, the nation's largest estuary, whose watershed is home to 18 million people, gets only lip service, with a \$77 million (90%) cut.

Cuts to Other State Environmental Programs

Air quality - Financial assistance to improve air quality would be cut by \$221 million (56%).

Grants for air and radiation protection would be cut \$88 million (35%):

- Grants for state and local air quality management would be cut by \$76 million (33%), to \$152 million.
- Grants for tribal air quality management would be cut 30%, to \$9 million.
- Radon protection grants, previously funded at \$8 million, would be eliminated.
- Two programs to protect air quality would also be cut by \$130 million:
 - **Targeted airshed grants** to improve air quality in the five areas in most serious violation of air quality standards by \$56 million
 - **Grants to reduce diesel emissions** in communities facing highly concentrated diesel pollution that is harmful to children would be cut by \$77 million (89%).

Hazardous waste financial assistance to states would drop \$30 million (31%), to \$66 million, even though the U.S. has 60,000 federally regulated hazardous waste facilities; 80% of the population lives within three miles and 50% lives within one mile of one or more such facilities.

Brownfield grants under two programs to clean up brownfields, former commercial or industrial sites where real or perceived contamination affects future use, would be cut by \$24 million (18%).

Pesticides & toxics grants would be cut by \$23 million (41%), with cuts including:

- Grants to address lead in buildings and train lead paint abatement workers would be cut by \$4 million (29%).
- Grants to states for pesticide program implementation and enforcement that can reduce risks to workers would be cut to \$17 million (48%).

Multi-media grants to help Indian tribes develop environmental programs would be cut by \$21 million (32%) to \$44 million.

Cuts for Science and Climate Programs Will Harm States

EPA's proposed budget also slashes **science** funding by \$214 million (43%). This will weaken environmental protection by states, which depend heavily on EPA science to support their work in protecting the environment, and to inform their regulatory work.

On **climate**, EPA is uniquely positioned to advance our knowledge of how to understand and address the world-wide and national threat of climate change. This is an area that is difficult or impossible for states, whose authority generally does not extend beyond their boundaries, to address. Thus, EPA's virtual elimination of climate work leaves yet another challenge to the states.

In sum, EPA's claim that it wants to empower states and help them regulate more effectively is transparently disingenuous. The EPA budget does not even make a pretense of providing a realistic formula for passing environmental decisionmaking to the states. The only formula it provides is for passing the buck.