

Dirty Air, Dirty Deeds

Trump Administration Shuts Out Public Input, Increases Toxic Air Pollution

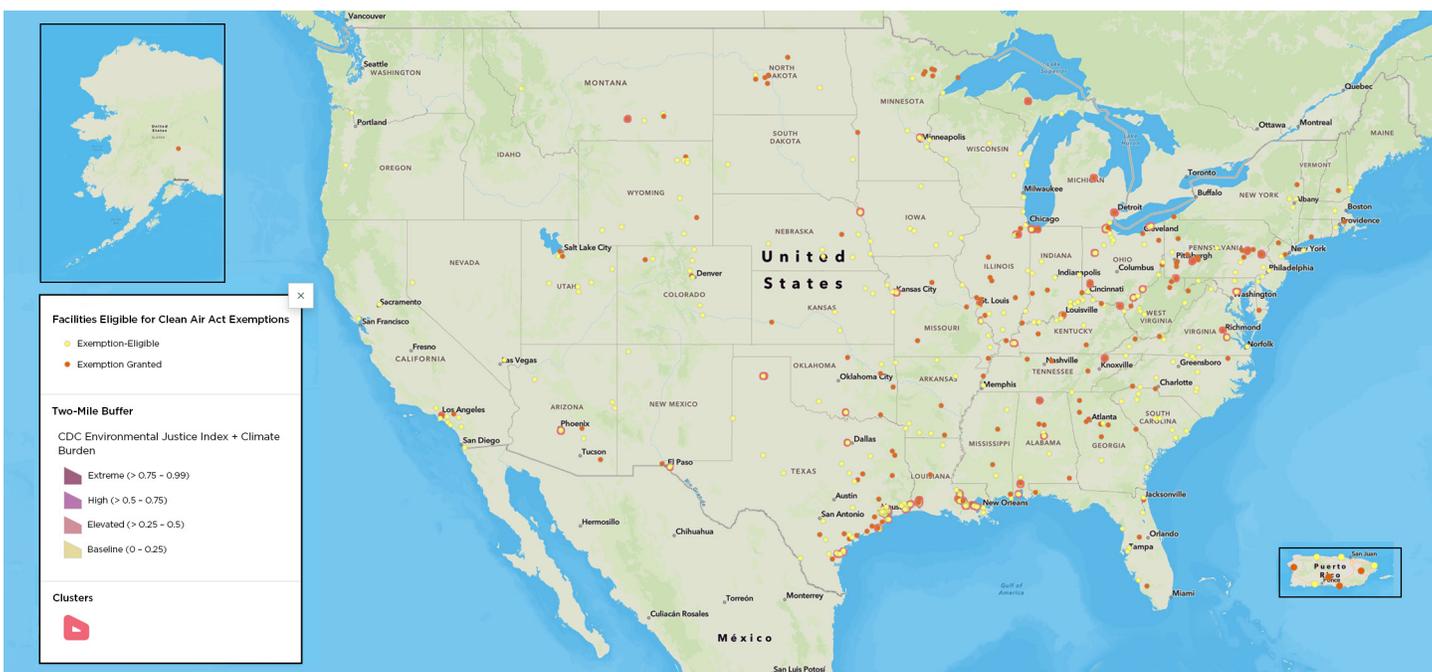
President Trump has given free rein to some of the country's most polluting industries. He has largely exempted more than **one-third** (188) of coal plants, chemical manufacturers, coke ovens, and other facilities from clean air rules put in place to protect communities from documented toxic air pollution harms (see Figure 1). According to a Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) analysis, nearly **4.6 million** people across 46 US states and Puerto Rico live within two miles of at least one exemption-eligible facility, and there are more than 4,300 schools and daycares in these areas. Sites in Texas, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, and Illinois have received the most exemptions.

In March 2025, President Trump invoked a Clean Air Act provision reserved for national emergencies to give air-polluting

industries a two-year exemption from Clean Air Act responsibilities (EPA 2025). The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) told companies and operators that a simple exemption-request email could serve as an exemption application. The Trump administration ultimately plans to weaken these regulations permanently (EPA 2025).

Nearly half the exemption-eligible facilities are in communities that have air pollution-related cancer risks **80 times** higher than the EPA guideline (OAQPS 1999). Furthermore, UCS identified 60 clusters where two or more exemption-eligible facilities are within two miles of one another. Texas and Louisiana have the most clusters of exemption-eligible facilities, with 14 and 11, respectively.

FIGURE 1. Facilities That Have Received or Are Eligible for Clean Air Act Exemptions



UCS found that nearly 4.6 million people across the United States and Puerto Rico live within two miles of at least one industrial facility that emits toxic air pollutants and has been deemed eligible for exemption from its Clean Air Act responsibilities. More than one-third of these facilities have already been granted an exemption.

Figure 1 shows the 546 exemption-eligible facilities in the United States and Puerto Rico. The pink line drawn around some facilities shows areas where there are multiple exemption-eligible facilities located within two miles of each other; these areas may be affected by pollution from multiple facilities. Each facility is also surrounded by a two-mile buffer. These areas are color-coded according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Environmental Justice Index (EJI) scores, which indicate the estimated cumulative burden of pollution, climate, health, and social stressors these communities face. (Visit www.ucs.org/resources/dirty-air-dirty-deeds to use the interactive map).

Already Overburdened Communities Face the Biggest Dangers

These harmful and reckless exemptions will hit communities already overburdened by social and environmental stressors. UCS found that nearly three-quarters (**73 percent**) of exemption-eligible facilities are in areas already considered at high or extreme risk according to the EJI (ATSDR 2024). People in these communities may currently experience higher poverty rates, unacceptable levels of air and water pollution, flooding and extreme heat risks, high asthma and cancer rates, and more related injury. Evidence suggests that these exemptions, and future rule rollbacks, will increase cancer risks in these communities (Jouppi 2025; Kelly, Banks, and Rosenthal 2025). UCS found that **62 percent** of the communities near exempted and exemption-eligible facilities already have air toxics cancer risks that are higher than the national average.

Take Action

The Trump administration is endangering people's health and safety to line the pockets of politically powerful corporations and the fossil fuel industry, and cutting the public out of the decision-making process. The EPA's effort to cast aside these protections denies workers, children, and families their right to clean air.

You can help hold the Trump administration accountable by taking the following actions:

- Share the map with your neighbors, colleagues, and community leaders.
- Contact your members of Congress to ask them to hold President Trump and the EPA accountable for recklessly using these exemptions to give polluters a free pass.

References

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