

Hearing Testimony: Gov. Edmund G. Brown Jr.

*U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Reform, Subcommittee on Environment
Trump's Wrong Turn on Clean Cars: The Effects of Fuel Efficiency Rollbacks on
the Climate, Car Companies and California
October 29, 2019*

Chairman Rouda, Ranking Member Comer, and members of the Subcommittee on Environment:

My name is Jerry Brown. I served as governor of the state of California from 1975 until 1983 and again from 2011 until 2019, a period during which awareness of our severe environmental challenges increased dramatically.

Today as we meet, our wellbeing and our very civilization face profound challenges. Although you would never know it by listening to the climate deniers, seas are rising, glaciers are melting, tropical diseases are spreading and drought is devastating the lives of millions of people.

Despite the obvious peril, too many elected officials still sing the swan song written for them by the most brazen of the climate deniers. These benighted politicians ignore and minimize environmental dangers, while falsely claiming that the economy and jobs require repealing environmental policies and tearing up the Paris Agreement.

It wasn't always like this. [In 1970](#), a year after the Santa Barbara oil spill polluted California's coastline, President Richard Nixon, pointed to the personal responsibility of each and every American to act:

We have been too tolerant of our surroundings and too willing to leave it to others to clean up our environment. It is time for those who make massive demands on society to make some minimal demands on themselves. Each of us must resolve that each day he will leave his home, his property, the public places of the city or town a little cleaner, a little better, a little more pleasant for himself and those around him.

Less than a year later, President Nixon established the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to help deliver on this commitment. Nearly a decade and a half later, in his annual address before a Joint Session of the Congress on the [State of the Union in 1984](#), President Ronald Reagan doubled down:

As we develop the frontier of space, let us remember our responsibility to preserve our older resources here on Earth. Preservation of our environment is not a liberal or conservative challenge, it's common sense. Though this is a time of budget constraints, I have requested for EPA one of the largest percentage budget increases of any agency.

These words, and this commitment, should come as no surprise. It was Ronald Reagan who signed California's Mulford-Carrell Air Resources Act in 1967, just months after being sworn in as governor. This landmark legislation created the California Air Resources Board, committing the state to an aggressive, unified statewide approach to combating air pollution.

That same year, the Federal Air Quality Act of 1967 was enacted, giving California the ability to set its own more stringent air quality rules. And three years later, it was President Nixon who broadened California's authority by signing the Federal Clean Air Act, which gave the state the power to set its own separate and stricter-than-federal vehicle emissions regulations.

These actions by two of America's most prominent Republican leaders demonstrate how mainstream and bi-partisan environmental concern used to be. Up until very recently, both parties could see that cars, unencumbered by sound pollution controls, caused cities in California to choke in sickening smog, exacerbated by the state's unique geography, weather and rapidly growing population.

Despite current craziness in some quarters over environmental regulation, Congress has historically reaffirmed California's authority to act. And as a result, [thousands of lives have been saved](#), our air is cleaner and California's carbon emissions have been slashed below 1990 levels.

And the rest of the nation has taken notice. More than a dozen other states led by both Democrats and Republicans, representing more than 40 percent of the U.S. car market, have adopted California's clean car standards.

Even automakers are recognizing that the future is in California, not Washington. Earlier this year, four of the world's largest car companies, representing 30 percent of the U.S. market – BMW, Ford, Honda and Volkswagen – struck their own deal with California on a framework that, if built into agreements, would keep them on course and reduce vehicle emissions.

These companies know that most of the world is moving towards cleaner and cleaner vehicles and that those companies which stick with combustion engines will find themselves shut out of markets everywhere. Vehicle standards are already stricter in Europe and China. In five years, the zero emission car will outcompete most fossil fuel models.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: rolling back California's clean car rules, as the President is proposing, is just plain dumb, if not commercially suicidal. It also would jeopardize the health of millions of Americans.

According to the [California Air Resources Board's analysis](#), if the EPA rollback becomes reality, air pollution will spike in cities throughout the country, including Los Angeles. And, consumers will waste billions of dollars at the pump on high-polluting vehicles. It will undermine American competitiveness, create enormous uncertainty for the auto industry, and threaten jobs and investments in clean energy and cleaner cars.

Now is the time, not for rollback, but for common purpose and strong action, like what Presidents Nixon and Reagan did in their time. If we see our predicament clearly, we will do what is necessary and rediscover America's bold and innovative spirit. Stopping climate change and protecting health builds America.

Let's get it done. Pass the laws, block the stupidity and get back on the side of science and the environment.

Thank you.