

## POINT OF VIEW: An inauspicious environmental start for Trump

OPINION



Posted: 9:21 p.m. Wednesday, February 15, 2017

---

Just a few weeks into his presidency, Donald Trump has already begun living down to the low expectations many people had for him with respect to the environment.

The president has called for fracking and oil drilling on public lands and reviving dangerous proposals for new oil pipelines. He began working to undo President Barack Obama's package of rules to limit greenhouse emissions from power plants, and he moved to narrow the government's jurisdiction to regulate water pollution.

And to lead the charge, he nominated a champion of the oil industry, Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt, to head the Environmental Protection Agency.

Pruitt's most frequent dealings with the EPA have been in court, bringing numerous lawsuits challenging its legal authority. He maintains that the causes of global climate change are "open to debate" and has often expressed adamant ideological opposition to the involvement of federal agencies in environmental matters.

Trump has frozen EPA's hiring, as he has across the federal government. He's also placed a blanket hold on all new EPA regulations that were finalized under Obama but that have not yet gone into effect. Significantly, the new administration temporarily prohibited EPA from continuing work on contracts and barred it from issuing grants.

The stated rationale is a set of urban myths and "alternative facts." Though opponents have long claimed that environmental standards result in major job losses, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that that job losses resulting from enforcement of federal regulations are negligible.

Indeed, such losses are often more than made up for by the hiring of workers in "green industries." Moreover, gutting EPA won't get Trump any traction with deficit reduction: EPA accounts for one-tenth of 1 percent of the federal budget.

The president seems intent on ignoring clear scientific consensus on climate change and perfectly content to ignore the lives lost to air and water pollution and toxins as a result of maladies ranging from cancer and asthma to diseases of the heart and endocrine system.

Significantly, the primary victims are the elderly, fetuses, babies and toddlers, and people who are already sick.

It is difficult to understand how gutting safeguards for health and the environment is part of "making America great again."

JOEL A. MINTZ, FORT LAUDERDALE

Editor's note: Joel Mintz is a professor of law at Nova Southeastern University College of Law.

---

---