

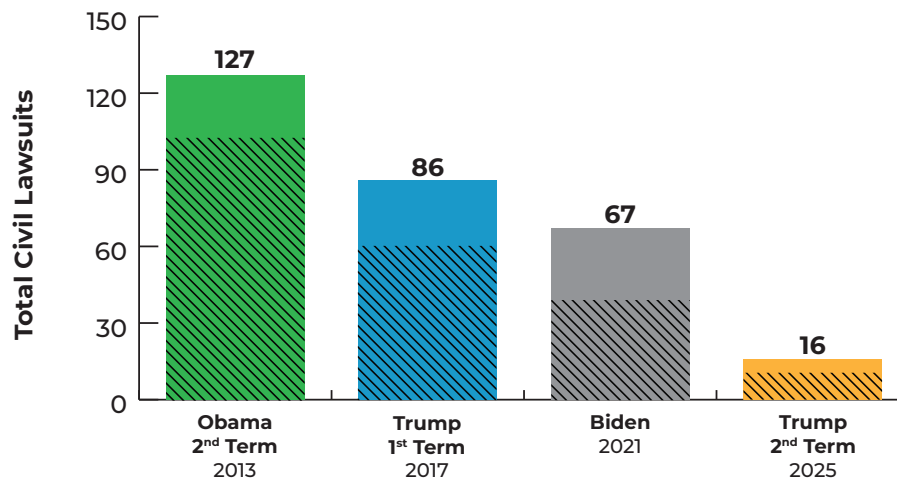


## Declining Environmental Enforcement in Trump's Second Term

Feb. 5, 2026

Environmental law enforcement suffered a dramatic collapse in the first year of the second Trump Administration. Civil lawsuits against polluters fell to an historic low in the year after Inauguration Day, with only 16 complaints filed since January 20, 2025, by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) in cases referred by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), according to a review of federal court records. That represents a 76 percent decline compared to the Biden Administration's first year, an 81 percent drop compared to the same period in the first Trump Administration, and 87 percent fewer than the first year of President Obama's second term. Settlements of lawsuits against polluters likewise fell sharply, from 186 under Obama in 2013 to 40 under Trump in 2025, evidence that very few cases are moving forward through the traditional enforcement pipeline. All this data suggests that EPA and the Department of Justice have all but abandoned pursuing complex, high-impact cases involving serious violations that threaten public health and the environment.

**Graph 1. Civil Lawsuits Filed Against Polluters in the First Year of Each Administration**



**Note:** The number of lawsuits filed (represented by the colored bars above) are from Inauguration Day to one year later for each administration. The cross hatching on the bars represents the portion of those lawsuits that are filed with consent decrees, which require polluters to take clean-up actions and pay penalties to address violations in the complaint. It is common practice for the Department of Justice to negotiate a settlement agreement prior to filing a complaint in federal court.

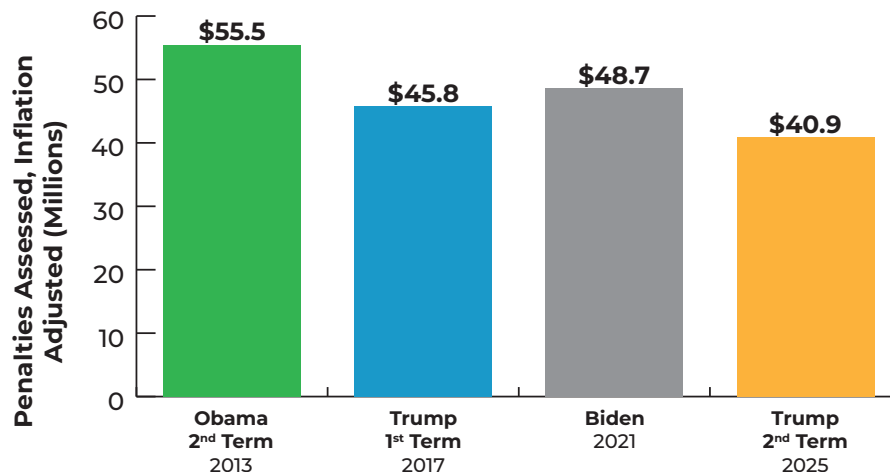
This enforcement decline is by design. A series of policy directives that benefit fossil fuel companies over the health and wellbeing of the American people have created a chilling effect on enforcement activity, as has the reduction of staff in the Department of Justice's environmental division and EPA. Examples of policy changes include new internal pre-approval requirements for enforcement actions that might affect energy production, heightened standards for finding violations, and restrictions on injunctive relief that protect communities and ensure compliance.<sup>1,2</sup> All of these changes interfere with EPA's ability to respond effectively to environmental violations.

These policy shifts are not occurring in a vacuum, but rather as part of a broader, coordinated effort by the Trump Administration to dismantle the federal environmental protection regime under the guise of a fake “energy emergency.”<sup>3</sup> For example, the administration is attempting to roll back an unprecedented number of rules designed to protect public health<sup>4</sup> and fast track approvals for oil and gas operations.<sup>5</sup> The administration is also preventing access to critical pollution and public health information through the removal of databases like EJScreen that allow communities and regulators to identify and address disproportionate environmental burdens.<sup>6</sup> In parallel, the administration has undermined the role of science by eliminating the Office of Research and Development and sidelining scientific expertise within EPA.<sup>7</sup> The Department of Justice (DOJ) recently announced that it is halting all criminal cases against violators who install devices to defeat vehicle emissions testing systems.<sup>8</sup> These actions have been compounded by the firing, or pressure-driven departures, of thousands of experienced staff at EPA and DOJ, further hollowing out the government’s capacity to hold polluters accountable and protect communities from harm.<sup>9, 10</sup>

The federal government can respond to illegal pollution in a number of ways, including through EPA administrative enforcement actions instead of lawsuits filed against violators in federal court. The total number of administrative cases settled between President Trump’s inauguration and the end of the federal fiscal year on September 30, 2025, increased by 35 percent compared to the same period for the Biden Administration and by 15 percent compared to the prior Trump Administration, although it was 8 percent lower than during the same period of Obama’s second term. (See Table 5 on page 7). That recent uptick under Trump was driven primarily by enforcement of two specific statutory provisions related to the submission of industrial risk-management plans and compliance with standards for drinking water systems. These cases account for nearly 40 percent of all administrative cases settled so far by the Trump Administration. The Trump administration has not increased administrative enforcement actions to halt violations of pollution limits or permit requirements that result in unlawful releases of dangerous contaminants into the air and water from industrial operations.

In addition, the total amount of administrative penalties assessed against polluters so far during the current Trump Administration has been 26 percent lower than the same period of time in the Obama Administration and is 16 percent lower compared to the Biden Administration, after adjusting for inflation.

**Graph 2. Administrative Penalties Assessed to Polluters by Administration**



**Note:** The EPA administrative penalty figures above are inflation adjusted and from Inauguration Day, January 20, of the relevant year, to September 30 of that year, which marks the end of the federal fiscal year. **Source:** EPA’s Enforcement and Compliance History (ECHO) database.

The need for stronger environmental law enforcement is clear. For example, as of January 2026, there were 697 facilities across the U.S. that EPA listed as having “high priority violations” of air pollution laws dating back more than 34 months, according to the agency’s Enforcement and Compliance History Online database.<sup>11</sup>

There were also 3,001 facilities listed as being in “significant noncompliance” with the Clean Water Act dating back at least three years.<sup>12</sup> But over the last year, only 12 percent of facilities with air pollution violations received any kind of enforcement action (e.g. civil or criminal lawsuits or administrative orders) from EPA or state agencies, while only 2 percent of facilities with water pollution violations received any enforcement action.<sup>13</sup> This suggests that many polluting companies and industrial facilities known for having the most serious violations are not being held accountable by EPA or state agencies. This lax enforcement of air and water pollution laws harms the health and quality of life of local communities across the U.S. and damages the environment and climate.

**Only 12%**  
of facilities with air pollution violations received any kind of enforcement action from EPA or state agencies in the last year.

## **The Challenge of Measuring First-Year Enforcement Efforts**

Measuring EPA’s enforcement effort requires examining multiple metrics over time, recognizing that enforcement cases often take more than a year—or in many instances several years—from an inspection to final resolution. Enforcement effort is best assessed through a combination of indicators, including, for example, the number and type of administrative cases initiated and settled, the number and type of judicial complaints filed and consent decrees entered, and the time required to resolve violations once they are identified. Equally important is whether injunctive relief and civil penalties are meaningful enough to ensure compliance going forward and deter future noncompliance by the violator and by the regulated community more broadly. Staffing and budget for enforcement programs are also critical measures. Taken together, these metrics provide a more complete picture of whether the EPA is actively identifying violations, holding polluters accountable, and achieving durable compliance with environmental laws.

A comprehensive evaluation of the current Trump Administration’s enforcement effort at this time is challenging for a variety of reasons. These include the fact that it often takes several months to investigate and develop an enforcement case, and so many of the actions taken during the first year of any administration likely started during the previous administration. In addition, although information about judicial cases is available for the first full year of the Trump Administration, reliable data on administrative cases are only available through the end of the federal fiscal year, on September 30. Finally, at the time of the writing of this report, EPA had not yet published its annual enforcement report.

This analysis focuses on key metrics that provide insight into the current administration’s enforcement efforts: judicial complaints filed, consent decrees entered, administrative cases settled, and penalties assessed for administrative cases. EIP also reviewed recent enforcement guidance issued by the EPA that explains the current Trump Administration’s enforcement policy.

## **Judicial Enforcement for Civil Violations Decline Sharply**

Judicial enforcement actions for civil violations have plummeted during the current Trump Administration compared to the same time period during the three prior administrations. EPA may address civil violations of environmental laws through judicial or administrative enforcement actions depending on the nature of the violation and other factors. EPA has the legal authority to issue orders and assess penalties through administrative enforcement actions, which are led by the agency and generally involve less complex violations and corrective action. Judicial enforcement actions, by contrast, are formal lawsuits filed in federal court by the DOJ on behalf of the government after a referral from the



EPA. These enforcement actions generally involve more serious and complex violations of the law where EPA is seeking significant injunctive relief and higher penalties through a judicial consent decree. Judicial enforcement actions may be civil or criminal in nature.<sup>14</sup>

EIP examined the number of civil judicial complaints filed and cases settled during the first full year of the current Trump administration<sup>15</sup> compared to the previous three administrations. We reviewed the date a complaint is filed in court, whether a proposed consent decree was filed with the complaint, and the date a consent decree was entered by the court.<sup>16</sup> In most cases, where the government has successfully engaged in what is sometimes referred to as “pre-filing negotiations” with a defendant, the DOJ and EPA may file a proposed consent decree at the same time or soon after it files the complaint. Just over two thirds of the time, DOJ and EPA file complaints and consent decrees together, regardless of administration.

The extensive investigative and legal work involved in filing a judicial complaint and negotiating a judicial consent decree can take a year or more. This means that cases often span administrations. Most of the cases resolved in 2025, during the first year of the current Trump Administration, for example, (33 out of 40) were initiated by previous administrations.

But the number of judicial complaints filed (with and without lodged consent decrees) and consent decrees entered by courts during the first year of the Trump Administration show that judicial civil prosecutions have all but ground to a halt.



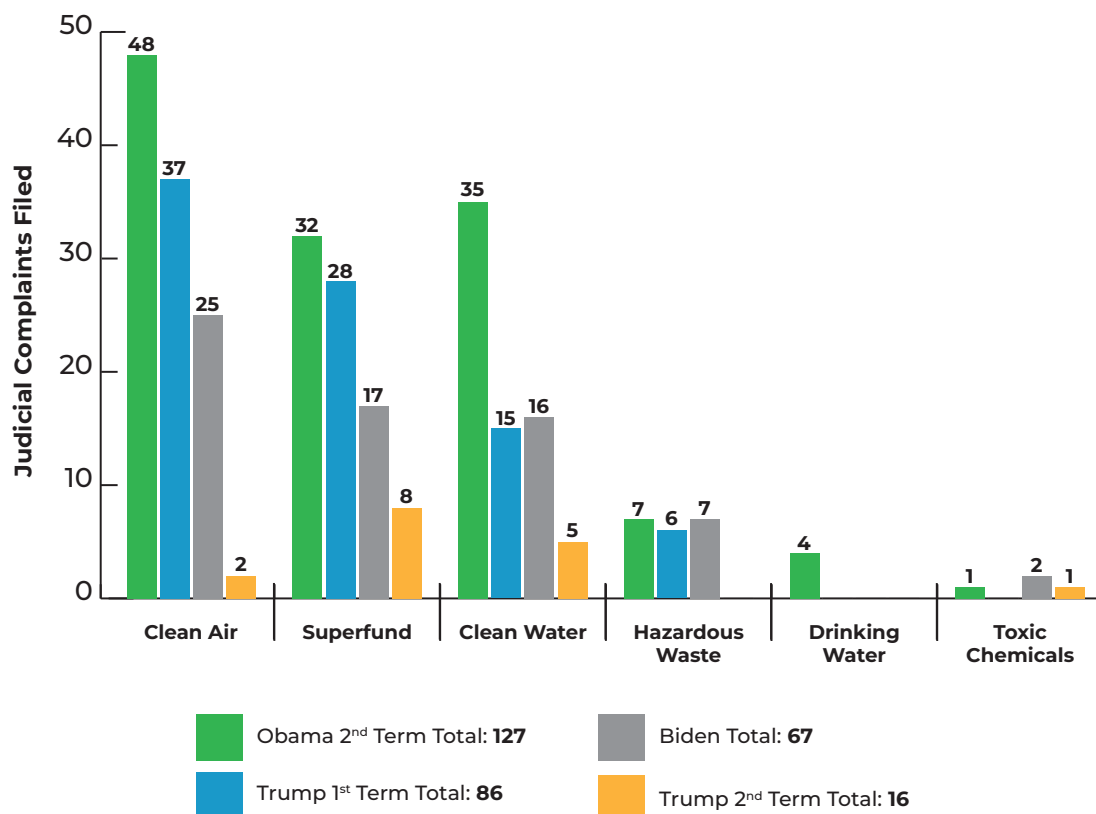
Shell Norco Chemical Plant in Norco, Louisiana. Photo by Garth Lenz.

## Far Fewer Complaints Filed Against Polluters

Judicial complaints filed for civil violations during the first full year of the current Trump Administration have plummeted and are down 87 percent compared to the same period for Obama's second term; down 76 percent compared to the first year of the Biden Administration; and down 81 percent compared to the first Trump Administration.

Overall, the data shows that the current Trump Administration is not serious about holding polluters accountable, even when they commit significant violations of our environmental laws that jeopardize the health and wellbeing of communities.

**Graph 3. Judicial Complaints Filed in First Year of Administration, by Statute**

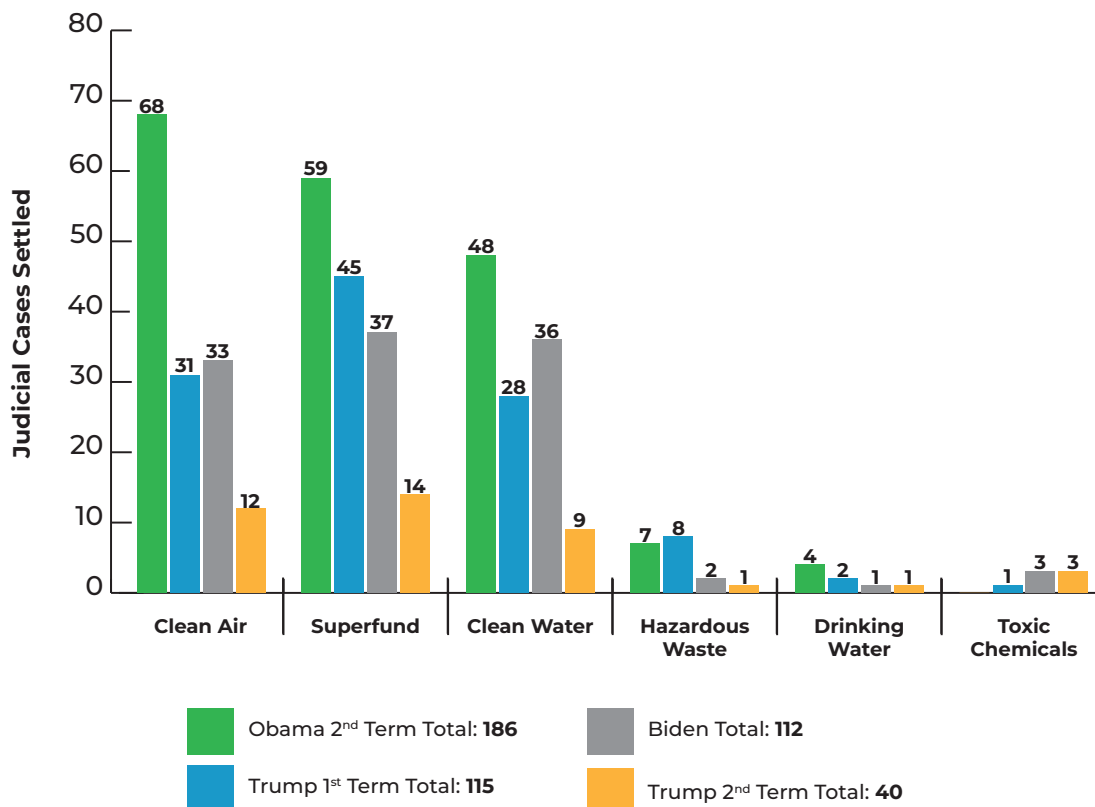


**Notes:** “Superfund” law here refers to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), which requires cleanup of hazardous dump and pollution sites. “Hazardous Waste” refers to the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act or RCRA. “Toxic Chemicals” refers to the Toxic Substances Control Act or TSCA. The CERCLA numbers exclude bankruptcy cases and those that involve access orders.

## Case Settlements Decline Under Trump Administration

Similarly, the number of judicial cases settled under the second Trump Administration in the past year have decreased by 64 percent compared to the Biden Administration, by 65 percent compared to the first Trump Administration, and by 78 percent compared to Obama's second term.

**Graph 4. Judicial Cases Settled by Administration and Statute**



**Note:** For our analysis, settled cases are cases for which a consent decree has been entered by the court. "Superfund" law here refers to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), which requires cleanup of hazardous dump and pollution sites. "Hazardous Waste" refers to the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act or RCRA. "Toxic Chemicals" refers to the Toxic Substances Control Act or TSCA. The CERCLA numbers exclude bankruptcy cases and those that involve access orders.

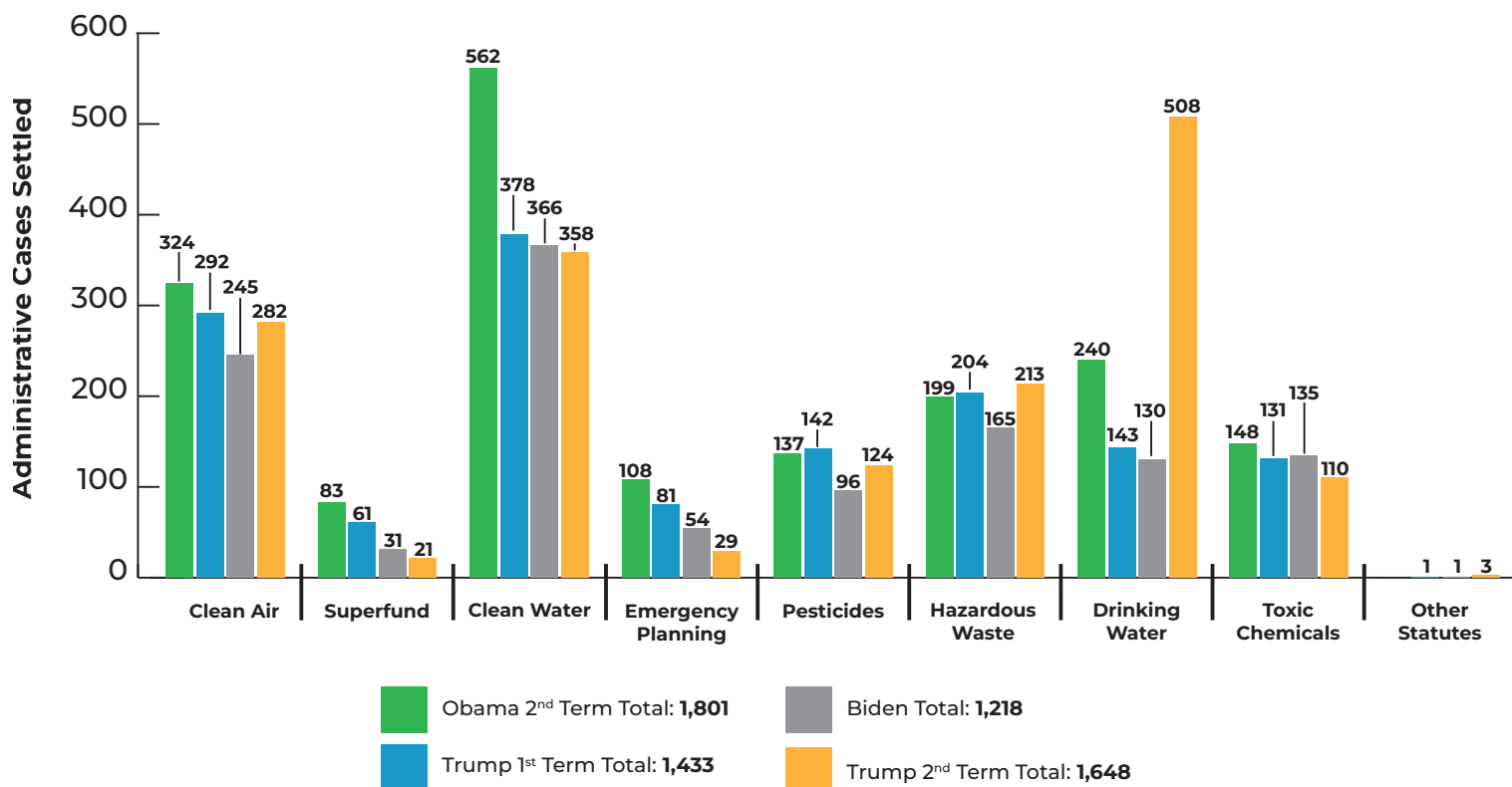
## Administrative Cases Settled and Penalties Assessed

EPA may resolve some kinds of environmental violations through administrative cases, rather than in court. These cases move faster and aim to quickly resolve what are generally less serious or less complex violations. Data about these cases by federal fiscal year (October 1 to September 30) are available in a database called Enforcement and Compliance History Online.<sup>17</sup> Overall, we found that the number of administrative cases increased in the first eight months of Trump's second term (Inauguration Day to September 30) compared to the Biden Administration, but was less than during the second Obama Administration. But the number of cases where polluters were required to pay penalties and the overall value of penalties assessed under the second Trump Administration decreased. This suggests that the Trump Administration may be letting more polluters get by with a slap on the wrist when the Administration does take enforcement action.

## Total Administrative Cases Increased Under Trump Administration

The total number of administrative cases settled by the current Trump Administration during its first eight months (Inauguration Day through September 30) decreased by 8 percent compared to the same period during the second term of the Obama Administration, but increased by 35 percent compared to the Biden Administration and 15 percent compared to the first Trump Administration.

**Graph 5. Administrative Cases Settled by Administration and Statute, Inauguration to End of Fiscal Year**



**Note:** “Superfund” law here refers to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), which requires cleanup of hazardous dump and pollution sites. “Emergency Planning” refers to the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA). “Pesticides” above refers to Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act or FIFRA. “Hazardous Waste” refers to the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act or RCRA. “Toxic Chemicals” refers to the Toxic Substances Control Act or TSCA. “Other Statutes” include administrative cases settled under the American Innovation and Manufacturing (AIM) Act and the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries (MRPSA) Act. For table with full fiscal years, see the appendix.

Administrative enforcement actions under two specific statutory provisions account for nearly 40 percent of the total settled administrative cases for the current Trump Administration. Section 112(r)(7) of the Clean Air Act requires companies to submit and update risk management plans to reduce the risks of accidental chemical releases.<sup>18</sup> Sections 1412 and 1414 of the Safe Drinking Water Act require public drinking water systems to comply with federal drinking water standards and report violations to the public.

Administrative settlements under the second Trump Administration declined under other programs, however. For example, the current administration resolved fewer cases involving violations of toxic site cleanup laws. It also settled fewer cases that concern emergency planning and public reporting of toxic releases compared to previous administrations. In addition, there has not been an increase in administrative cases that involve violations of pollution limits or permit requirements at industrial operations that release illegal pollution. In other words, the Trump administration has not increased administrative enforcement efforts to address the dramatic drop in civil judicial prosecutions.



## Administrative Penalties Decline Under Trump Administration

Civil penalties, the amount of money recovered from polluters, are intended to deter future noncompliance by the defendant, as well as other industrial operators, and ensure that companies do not profit from breaking the law. While the second Trump Administration settled more total cases than the Biden Administration, only 50 percent of those settled cases between Inauguration Day and the end of the fiscal year on September 30 included a penalty. By contrast, the Biden Administration included penalties in 59 percent of settled cases; the first Trump Administration, 66 percent; and the second Obama Administration, 61 percent.

After adjusting for inflation, the total value of penalties assessed in the current Trump Administration is also the lowest of the four administrations, declining by about 25 percent from Obama's second term compared to the current Trump term (from \$55 million to \$41 million) and by 16 percent since Biden's first term (from \$49 million to \$41 million).<sup>19</sup> See Graph 2 on page 2.

After adjusting for inflation, the total value of administrative penalties assessed in the current Trump Administration is the **lowest** of the four administrations.

## Policy Directives Hamper Enforcement Efforts

### Fake “Energy Emergency” Chills Enforcement Efforts

On his first day in office, President Trump declared that the United States is facing an “energy emergency” and directed EPA and other agencies to take actions to “unleash American energy.”<sup>20</sup> In reality, there is no energy emergency, according to data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration.<sup>21</sup> But that has not stopped the Trump Administration from using the fake energy emergency as an excuse for rolling back protections that are intended to protect the health of the American people and our natural resources.<sup>22</sup>

On March 12, 2025, the acting assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance (“enforcement office”) issued a memo that requires approval in advance by the assistant administrator, a political appointee, for any “proposed order or other enforcement action that would unduly burden or significantly disrupt energy production or power generation, shut down any facility engaged in energy production or power generation, or severely restrict capacity for energy production or power generation.”<sup>23</sup> The memo does not specifically define what kinds of facilities may require this pre-approval, instead using broad language that casts a wide net over a large variety of operations.<sup>24</sup> Nor does the memo define what “unduly burden,” “significantly disrupt,” or “severely restrict” means.<sup>25</sup>

Faced with having to choose between potentially running afoul of the directive or seeking approval from the head of the enforcement office, enforcement staff may not take enforcement action to resolve violations. In addition, different managers may interpret these kinds of directives differently. For example, a few months after the memo was distributed, some EPA staff claimed they were told to stop enforcement actions for violations at fossil fuel and oil and gas operations.<sup>26</sup> The ambiguous and laborious new bureaucratic review process imposed by the Trump Administration has the net effect of discouraging enforcement actions.

### Limiting the Ability of Enforcement Staff to Resolve Violations and Protect Communities from Illegal Pollution

A second memo from EPA's acting assistant administrator for enforcement issued on December 5, 2025, states that all enforcement activities “must properly consider” President Trump's executive orders that direct agencies to remove barriers to the rapid expansion of coal, oil and gas, and mineral operations, and that EPA's enforcement office “is key for . . . restoring American energy dominance.”<sup>27</sup>



The memo directs EPA staff to prioritize “compliance assistance” (i.e., “proactive outreach, technical assistance, and training to the regulated community”) over enforcement actions generally and creates a heightened standard for enforcement staff to issue a finding of violation.<sup>28</sup> Shockingly, the memo effectively invites companies who violate the law to challenge EPA interpretations of statutes and regulations, noting that these “questions must be elevated immediately” by inspectors and enforcement staff and resolved at a national level by the Office of General Counsel and the EPA enforcement office.<sup>29</sup> The practical effect of this is to take routine enforcement decisions out of the hands of experienced civil servants and put them into the hands of political appointees, which can discourage and stall enforcement efforts.

Substantial new constraints on injunctive relief (corrective actions that EPA requires violators to take to control pollution) are also included in the memo. One new requirement is for enforcement staff to seek advance approval from the enforcement office’s assistant administrator for most monitoring and third-party audit requirements. These requirements are often highly effective in ensuring polluters come back into compliance—and stay in compliance—after they have broken the law.<sup>30</sup> Mitigation, environmental projects that are intended to remedy or offset harm caused by pollution violations, also now requires prior approval from the assistant administrator. Supplemental environmental projects that provide benefits to communities hurt by polluters are now prohibited.<sup>31</sup>

Taken together, these two enforcement directives significantly hamper the ability of EPA enforcement staff to identify and effectively resolve serious violations of our pollution laws in a manner that ensures compliance going forward and remedies harm to communities and the environment caused by companies that break the rules. The new requirement for review by a political appointee for enforcement actions at energy production facilities will likely slow compliance efforts at coal, oil and gas, petrochemical, and other related industries.

The significant reduction in EPA and Department of Justice staff that has occurred since President Trump took office will only exacerbate these challenges. Congress recently voted to reduce EPA’s budget by \$325 million (about 4 percent) in fiscal year 2026, compared to fiscal 2025.<sup>32</sup> Even though Congress rejected President Trump’s proposal to slash EPA’s budget by 55 percent, funding for the agency has been steadily declining since the Obama Administration and there is no guarantee that the Trump Administration will fill positions vacated in 2025.

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**\$325  
million**

in fiscal year 2026.

## **Conclusion: EPA Enforcement Headed in the Wrong Direction**

Timely and effective enforcement is essential to ensuring that environmental laws achieve their intended purpose: protecting human health, safeguarding our natural resources, and providing a level playing field for companies that follow the law. While it is too early for a comprehensive evaluation of the Trump Administration’s efforts, several crucial measures suggest that EPA is moving sharply in the wrong direction on environmental enforcement. The agency appears to be abandoning the pursuit of judicial enforcement actions against violators and hampering the ability of enforcement staff to hold polluters accountable and protect communities from illegal pollution. When major violations go unaddressed or are resolved, effectively, with a “slap on the wrist,” communities—especially those already overburdened by pollution—are left to pay a heavy price.

## Authors

This report was researched and written by Keene Kelderman, Vincent Bregman, and Jen Duggan, with design by Alex Tayborn.

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## Appendix A: Methodology

EIP collected judicial case data by first downloading all civil judicial cases from EPA's Enforcement and Compliance History Online (ECHO) database. We downloaded all civil judicial cases that were either initiated and/or entered for the first full year of the last four administrations: Obama, Trump, Biden, and Trump. From both initiated and entered cases, we removed any bankruptcy or site order access cases. For cases with multiple settlement dates, we separated them (and any associated penalties, cost recovery, etc.) by their individual settlement dates. For the first three administrations, our case count is from ECHO as EPA staff have communicated to us that the historical data in ECHO is more reliable.

For settled cases, we reviewed the final order lodged date (i.e., the date a proposed consent decree is lodged with the court) and the settlement date (i.e., the date a lodged consent decree is entered by the court). For settled cases, our analysis relies on the settlement date—the date the consent decree is entered by the court. Although it is rare for EPA to withdraw a consent decree once it is lodged with the court, the consent decree does not become enforceable unless and until it is entered by the court. A document “lodged” with the court has been submitted to the clerk for consideration by the judge for review and can still be altered before it is agreed upon and entered.

For the current Trump administration, we also reviewed court dockets in addition to the information in ECHO. Since there is a delay in judicial cases entered into ECHO, particularly for the months after fiscal year 2025 closed, we supplemented our analysis with a review of filings in the federal courts' electronic filing system, Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER). If we found complaints or consent decrees filed by DOJ on behalf of EPA, we included that case in our dataset. Additionally, we used PACER to confirm case dates reported on ECHO. We identified several instances where the date the complaint was filed in ECHO did not match the date the complaint was filed in PACER; the date in our analysis is based on court records.

EIP collected administrative case data by downloading the ICIS FE&C Dataset, found on EPA's Enforcement and Compliance History Online [Data Downloads page](#). From this download, the CASE\_ENFORCEMENT\_CONCLUSIONS table was used. In their annual enforcement reports, EPA reports their total administrative case conclusions as the sum of “Administrative Compliance Orders” and “Final Administrative Penalty Orders”. Based on the data definitions provided on the [download summary](#) for this dataset, we selected only the settled cases with the following action codes: ACO (Administrative Compliance Orders) and APO (Administrative Penalty Order with or Without Injunctive Relief). We compared the fiscal year totals to values in previous annual reports and found that they closely matched what EPA reported. We analyzed these cases both by the full fiscal year and from inauguration to the end of that first full fiscal year for each administration.

While a critical data tool, ECHO has a few consistent, known data caveats related to this research. The data for this research was downloaded on January 14th, 2025. Depending on the statute, states and regions have 40 to 60 days to enter their data into the system, and new case information may be entered after this timeframe. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, dates in ECHO may sometimes be entered incorrectly. Finally, data on ECHO is not always complete and case information may sometimes be missing. We have attempted to mitigate these known issues as much as possible by checking against court records and additional data sources like press releases.

In this report, reference to enforcement actions means those actions that EPA classifies as “formal enforcement actions,” (i.e., civil or criminal lawsuits or administrative orders) and not what EPA calls “informal enforcement actions” (i.e., letters or notices of violations.)

## Appendix B

**Table 1. Administrative Cases Settled by Administration and Statute, Full Fiscal Year**

Statute	FY 2013	FY 2017	FY 2021	FY 2025
Clean Air	420	360	299	347
Superfund	108	84	43	30
Clean Water	688	525	435	487
Emergency Planning	129	107	59	34
Pesticides	160	178	131	153
Hazardous Waste	280	267	210	250
Drinking Water	294	173	152	556
Toxic Chemicals	172	149	151	140
Other Statutes	0	2	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,251</b>	<b>1,845</b>	<b>1,482</b>	<b>2,000</b>

**Note:** “Superfund” law here refers to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), which requires cleanup of hazardous dump and pollution sites. “Emergency Planning” refers to the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA). “Pesticides” above refers to Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act or FIFRA. “Hazardous Waste” refers to the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act or RCRA. “Toxic Chemicals” refers to the Toxic Substances Control Act or TSCA. “Other Statutes” include administrative cases settled under the American Innovation and Manufacturing (AIM) Act and the Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries (MRPSA) Act. For table with full fiscal years, see the appendix.

**Table 2. Administrative Case Penalties Assessed, Full Fiscal Year**

Fiscal Year	Total Penalty Assessed, inflation adjusted (millions of dollars)
2013	66.6
2017	63.3
2021	67.4
2025	53.2

**Source:** EPA’s Enforcement and Compliance History (ECHO) database.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Craig J. Pritzlaff, Acting Assistant Administrator of EPA, memo “Reinforcing a “Compliance First” Orientation for Compliance Assurance and Civil Enforcement Activities,” December 5, 2025. Links: <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2025-12/reinforcing-a-compliance-first-orientation-for-compliance-assurance-and-civil-enforcement-activities.pdf>
- <sup>2</sup> Jeffrey Hall, Acting Assistant Administrator for Office of Enforcement & Compliance, Memo Re Implementing National Enforcement and Compliance Initiatives Consistently with Executive Orders and Agency Priorities 3 (March 12, 2025), available at <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2025-03/necimemo-20250312.pdf>.
- <sup>3</sup> The White House, “Unleashing American Energy,” January 20, 2025. Link: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/unleashing-american-energy/>.
- <sup>4</sup> EPA press release, “EPA Launches Biggest Deregulatory Action in U.S. History,” March 12, 2025. Link: <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-launches-biggest-deregulatory-action-us-history>.
- <sup>5</sup> Environmental Integrity Project, “Trump Orders Hundreds of ‘Energy Emergency’ Permit Reviews for Projects that Could Damage Wetlands and Waterways,” February 19, 2025. Link: <https://environmentalintegrity.org/news/trump-orders-hundreds-of-energy-emergency-permit-reviews-for-projects-that-could-damage-wetlands-and-waterways/>.
- <sup>6</sup> Harvard Law School Environmental & Energy Law Program, “EJScreen Removed from EPA Website,” April 15, 2025. Link: <https://eelp.law.harvard.edu/tracker/epa-added-environmental-health-indicators-to-ejscreen/>.
- <sup>7</sup> Lisa Friedman and Maxine Joselow, “E.P.A. Says It Will Eliminate Its Scientific Research Arm,” The New York Times, July 18, 2025. Link: <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/18/climate/epa-firings-scientific-research.html>
- <sup>8</sup> Alex Guillen, “DOJ ends criminal prosecutions of vehicle emissions ‘defeat devices,’ Greenwire/E&E News, January 22, 2026. Link: <https://www.eenews.net/articles/doj-ends-criminal-prosecutions-of-vehicle-emissions-defeat-devices/>
- <sup>9</sup> Kevin Bogardus, “2,500+ EPA employees take Trump’s resignation offer,” Greenwire/Politico, November 14, 2025. Link: <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/eenews/2025/11/14/2-500-epa-employees-take-trumps-resignation-offer-00651660>
- <sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Blum and Chris Sellers, “Trump administration is on track to cut 1 in 3 EPA staffers by the end of 2025, slashing agency’s ability to keep pollution out of air and water,” The Conversation, September 29, 2025. Link: <https://theconversation.com/trump-administration-is-on-track-to-cut-1-in-3-epa-staffers-by-the-end-of-2025-slashing-agencys-ability-to-keep-pollution-out-of-air-and-water-265249>.
- <sup>11</sup> EPA Enforcement and Compliance Online History (ECHO) database, available at: <https://echo.epa.gov/>
- <sup>12</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Enforcement and Compliance History Online (ECHO). Retrieved January 27, 2026. Link: <https://echo.epa.gov/>. ECHO is a valuable tool, but its compliance-status indicators can lag behind real-world conditions. Facilities may remain listed as HPV or SNC after issues have been resolved if updates have not yet been processed in the underlying data systems. At the same time, ECHO may under-identify facilities that should be flagged as HPV/SNC when relevant information has not been reported or incorporated.
- <sup>13</sup> While these facilities received a formal enforcement action in the last year, that action may not be related to—or resolve—the specific issues that led to the facility’s SNC/HPV designation.
- <sup>14</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Enforcement Case Search Help.” ECHO (Enforcement and Compliance History Online). Last updated August 7, 2025. Accessed November 20, 2025. Link: <https://echo.epa.gov/help/enforcement-case-search-help>.
- <sup>15</sup> The first full year of data for each administration starts on the day they were inaugurated. Inauguration day for each administration occurred on January 20 of the given year except for the second Obama administration, which began on January 21.
- <sup>16</sup> When a consent decree is filed together with a complaint, the proposed consent decree is “lodged” with the court. In most cases, these consent decrees are published for public comment and EPA reviews and responds to these comments before asking the court to enter the consent decree. Although it is rare for EPA to withdraw a consent decree once it is lodged with the court, the consent decree does not become final until it is entered by the court. We identify those complaints that were accompanied by a proposed consent decree. For settled cases, our analysis relies on the date the consent decree was entered by the court.
- <sup>17</sup> While data for cases after September 30, 2026 are available for download and analysis, they are less reliable and complete than the data gathered for the fiscal year. There is a delay in cases uploaded to ECHO throughout the year, but the most complete set of data is a few months after the fiscal year, after EPA has performed a thorough check on the data entered.
- <sup>18</sup> Environmental Protection Agency (2020) “Clean Air Act Section 112(r): Accidental Release Prevention/Risk Management Plan Rule” Link: [https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-03/documents/caa112\\_rmp\\_factsheet\\_march\\_2020\\_final.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-03/documents/caa112_rmp_factsheet_march_2020_final.pdf), Accessed January 29, 2026.
- <sup>19</sup> Adjusted penalties for inflation to 2025 dollars, using the [CPI Inflation Calculator](#) from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Compared June of each year (2013, 2017, and 2021) to June of 2025.
- <sup>20</sup> The White House, Unleashing American Energy. Link: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/unleashing-american-energy/>. Accessed January 29, 2026.
- <sup>21</sup> Environmental Integrity Project. *Debunking Trump’s Fake “Energy Emergency”*. Link: <https://environmentalintegrity.org/debunking-trumps-fake-energy-emergency/>. Accessed January 29, 2026.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid
- <sup>23</sup> The EPA civil enforcement office is called the Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance. Source: Jeffrey Hall, Acting Assistant Administrator for Office of Enforcement & Compliance, Memo Re Implementing National Enforcement and Compliance Initiatives Consistently with Executive Orders and Agency Priorities 3 (March 12, 2025), available at <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2025-03/necimemo-20250312.pdf>.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup> Rene Marsh and Ella Nilsen, The Trump EPA is Telling Some Staff to Stop Policing the Oil & Gas Industry, CNN (June 16, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/politics/epa-stop-policing-oil-and-gas-midwest>.
- <sup>27</sup> Craig Pritzlaff, Acting Assistant Administrator for Office of Enforcement & Compliance, Memo Re Reinforcing a “Compliance First” Orientation



for Compliance Assurance and Civil Enforcement Activities 2 (Dec. 5, 2025). Link: <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2025-12/reinforcing-a-compliance-first-orientation-for-compliance-assurance-and-civil-enforcement-activities.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> Pritzlaff, pages 2-4.

<sup>29</sup> Pritzlaff, page 4.

<sup>30</sup> Pritzlaff, pages 5-6.

<sup>31</sup> Pritzlaff, page 6.

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Congress. House. Making consolidated appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026, and for other purposes. 119th Cong., 2d sess. Introduced January 2026. Link: <https://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20260105/CDS92500.PDF>. Accessed January 29, 2026.