

Human Rights Watch

Children's Rights

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/12/us-may-ax-regulations-and-allow-kids-work-pesticides>

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Obama Enacted Rules Banning Kids Under 18 from Working with Toxic Chemicals

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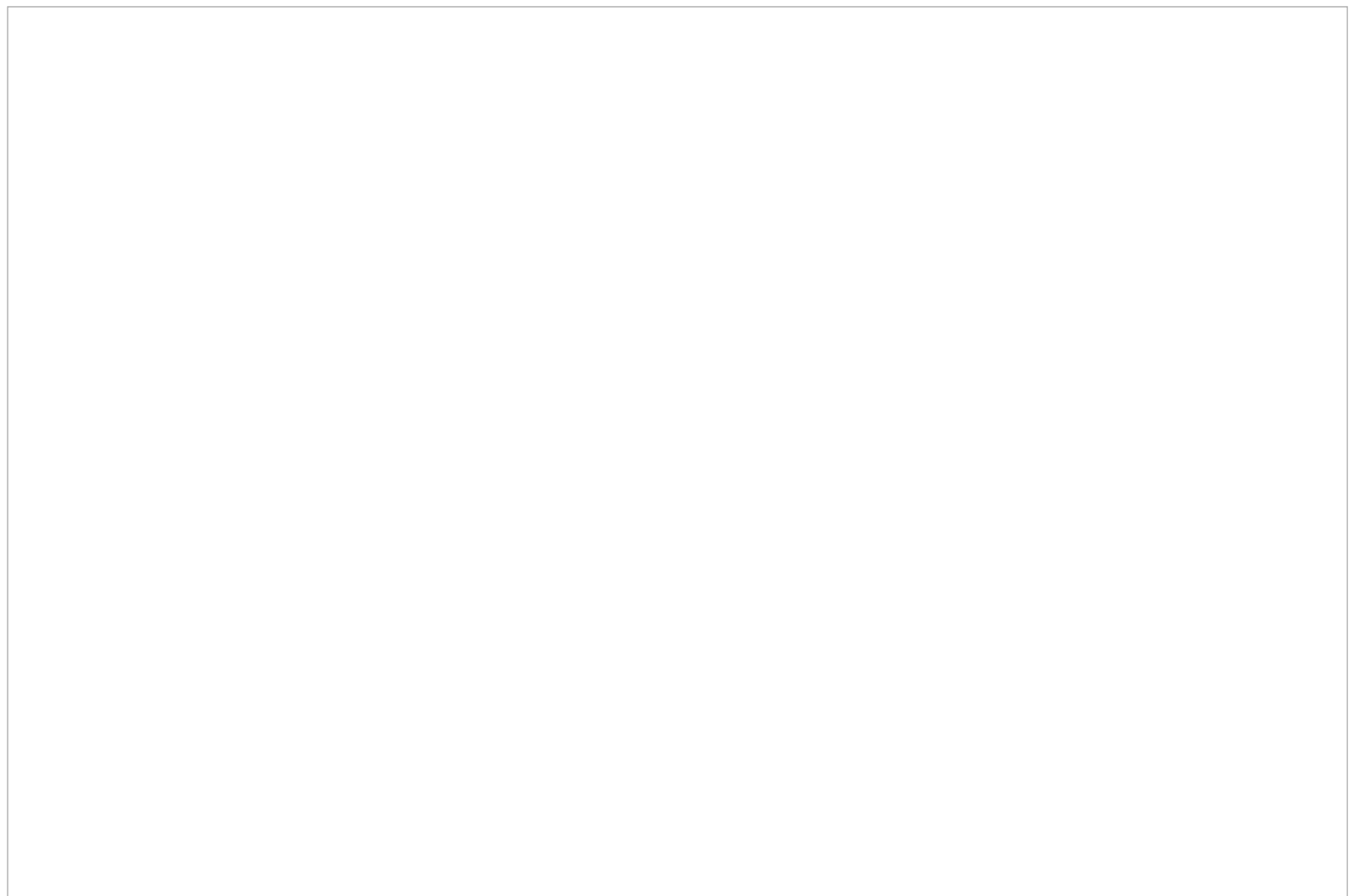
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I thought I had grown accustomed to being blindsided by bad news headlines detailing how the [United States](#) government is chipping away at human rights. But yesterday morning, I was newly shocked and outraged [when I heard](#) that the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) may roll back federal standards that ban children under 18 from working with toxic pesticides.

This move may just be another one of the Trump administrations sweeping attempts to undo regulations enacted under former President Barack Obama. But undoing or weakening these safeguards could leave many children in the US vulnerable to pesticide exposure.

Children younger than 18, who are in a critical stage of growth and development, are especially susceptible to toxic pesticides. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has said theres a clear link between [childhood exposure to pesticides](#) and pediatric cancers,

decreased cognitive function, and behavioral problems. Child health experts, including [the AAP and the Childrens Environment Health Network](#), have supported a minimum age of 18 for children to handle pesticides.

Ive interviewed more than 100 child farmworkers in the US while [researching child labor](#) in agriculture. Far too many of them described being exposed to pesticides and getting sick while they worked. One 16-year-old boy said he used a backpack sprayer to apply an insecticide on a tobacco farm in Virginia, adding that, I got home and felt dizzy and started puking.

The EPA announced that it is considering changing the standards in [two notices](#) published in the federal register in late December. One of the safeguards on the chopping block, [a revision to the Worker Protection Standard enacted in 2015](#), bans children under 18 from handling pesticides on farms, forests, nurseries, and greenhouses where they work and from re-entering fields where pesticides have recently been sprayed. The second rule bans kids under 18 from handling or applying high-risk pesticides known as restricted use pesticides, or RUPs in, on, or around schools, homes, farms, and other workplaces like golf courses.

These are common sense measures to protect childrens health, based on solid research. Yet even so, it took decades of fighting by advocates to get these protections passed, and they were only adopted after the EPA extensively reviewed the literature and analyzed public comments.

The EPA should advance its mission of protecting human health and the environment and drop this callous and harmful proposal.

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