

What are gas stove manufacturers trying to hide? Warning labels

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Published: December 18, 2025 8:34am EDT



Colorado was the first state to pass a law requiring warning labels on gas stoves.

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Colorado passed first-in-the-nation legislation requiring warning labels on gas stoves in June 2025. These warnings are similar to what is required by cigarette labeling laws.

The required labels urge consumers to educate themselves about the air quality implications of indoor gas stoves and direct consumers to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment for information on the health impacts. This could have a substantial impact, as government agencies estimate that about one-third of Colorado's households use gas as their primary cooking source.

The law went into effect on Aug. 6. The Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers is now suing Colorado and is asking a federal court to temporarily block the law from being enforced while the case proceeds. The parties are awaiting a hearing on this request.

I'm a legal scholar with expertise in First Amendment law. I research and publish papers focusing on laws, such as the new Colorado statute, that compel businesses to disclose information to consumers.

In my opinion, in opposing warning labels, the gas industry and its trade association are weaponizing the First Amendment to undermine a commonsense regulation that aims to keep residents safe and informed.

Warning labels in the US

Walk down an aisle in any toy store and you'll see tags alerting parents to the risk of choking. Flip over your prescription medication and you can read its side effects and interactions with other drugs. In the grocery store, food products have labels bearing information about calorie and sugar content to help consumers make healthier decisions.



Warning labels on cigarettes have been required in the U.S. since 1965.

MediaNews Group/Reading Eagle via Getty Images

Often taken for granted, these warning labels provide critical information to protect Americans' health and safety. Perhaps the most recognizable warning labels can be found on cigarette packages, required in the U.S. since 1965, to inform customers about the health harms of smoking. Despite the fact that warning labels on cigarettes have saved millions of lives, the tobacco industry fought tooth and nail against them to keep consumers in the dark. Since that time, federal, state and local laws requiring businesses to make truthful factual disclosures about their products have become commonplace.

Colorado lawsuit

In its lawsuit, the gas industry invokes the First Amendment's compelled speech doctrine. This doctrine prohibits the government from forcing people to make ideological statements they don't actually believe, such as reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

In 2018, in *National Institute of Family and Life Advocates v. Becerra*, the U.S. Supreme Court greatly expanded this rule and opened the door for challenges to government efforts to require businesses to disclose truthful statements of fact. The court held that the government cannot compel businesses to disclose factual information if it is "controversial."

Of course, it would be hard to find a manufacturer who does not think such disclosures are controversial, given that businesses are likely to disagree that their products are dangerous. If a subjective claim that a disclosure is controversial is all it takes to strike a law down, many such laws are vulnerable to legal attacks.

Interest groups representing the tobacco industry, the gas industry and others have seized on this opportunity to dismantle what most people understand to be routine labeling requirements. For example, companies have filed lawsuits challenging federal laws requiring companies to disclose that they use "conflict minerals" and local laws requiring beverage manufacturers to disclose that drinking sugar-sweetened drinks "contributes to obesity, diabetes and tooth decay."

In its lawsuit, the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers, a trade association that lobbies on behalf of the home appliance industry, argues that Colorado's law compels gas stove manufacturers to place warning labels on their products that it believes contain "scientifically controversial and factually misleading" information around gas stoves.

However, abundant evidence shows that cooking with a gas stove releases pollutants that harm human health. Multiple studies have shown that burning methane gas produces nitrogen oxide, carbon monoxide, formaldehyde and benzene that can worsen respiratory illnesses such as asthma and increase the risk of cancer.



Cooking with gas stoves indoors has been linked to human health harms such as asthma.

Michael Robinson Chavez/GettyImages

Furthermore, in 2022, the American Medical Association recognized that gas stove use can increase household air pollution, the risk of childhood asthma and asthma severity. The same year, the American Public Health Association recommended putting warning labels on gas stoves as an official policy position.

Public health advocates contend that the gas industry has known about the health harms of gas stoves for decades, but that the industry has repeatedly attempted to paint its products in a better light.

A 2023 expose by The New York Times, for example, revealed that the gas industry paid toxicologist Julie Goodman to downplay the health impacts of gas stoves. Just eight years earlier, Goodman provided testimony on behalf of tobacco companies. A judge described her testimony on tobacco as “contrary to consensus of the scientific community.”

Risk to consumers

If the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers’ claim succeeds in court, it could, in my analysis, make it much easier for companies to fund biased research or bring in experts to argue that something is not well-established science.

For example, a drug manufacturer could hire an expert to dispute the side effects of a drug. Food producers might claim their experts disagree with the science underlying nutrition and calorie information required by government regulation. Even manufacturers of everyday items such as lawnmowers or toasters could hire experts and proclaim that their products pose no safety harms.

Everyday people would bear the brunt of harm from the invalidation of warning label laws. These people currently have the right to know critical health and safety information before buying any product. If we let corporate interests undermine regulations such as warning labels, I believe we will no longer be able to inform the public about commonsense steps they can take to protect their health.

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Alan K. Chen does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organization that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.

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