

POLITICS

Trump: Administration Is Revoking California Emissions Waiver

'Auto makers should seize this opportunity,' president says on Twitter



Rescinding California's waiver would fulfill the administration's goal of curbing the state's influence over the car industry.

PHOTO: JOHN G MABANGLO/EPA/SHUTTERSTOCK

By Katy Stech Ferek in Washington and Alejandro Lazo in San Francisco

Updated Sept. 18, 2019 4:19 pm ET

President Trump said Wednesday that he is taking away California's power to set its own vehicle tailpipe emissions standards, escalating an environmental dispute that has trapped auto makers in the middle.

Mr. Trump said a single federal emissions standard would lower auto prices for consumers. California's top elected officials said the president was serving the interests of big oil companies and vowed to challenge the administration in court.

The latest jousting came as federal regulators are working on new federal tailpipe-emission rules that could ease requirements set under the Obama administration in 2012. In a series of Twitter posts, Mr. Trump said the uniformity will create jobs and safer cars.

California has long had the authority to set its own rules on limiting air pollutants from cars, but the Trump administration believes such requirements should be set by the federal government. The White House first proposed the revocation last year.

Rescinding the waiver would curb California's influence over the car industry. Earlier this year, Ford Motor Co. and several other major auto makers agreed to tougher emission requirements than those set by the Trump administration, giving them more certainty than other paths that were likely to result in prolonged legal battles.

"Auto makers should seize this opportunity because without this alternative to California, you will be out of business," Mr. Trump wrote on Twitter. The president was tweeting while in California for a series of fundraisers in Palo Alto, Beverly Hills and San Diego.

Mr. Trump's announcement drew quick backlash from California leaders. In a press conference alongside the governor and attorney general, Mary Nichols, chair of the California Air Resources Board, said the state would sue the Trump administration to protect what officials believe to be their right to maintain the waiver.

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"We will be in court as soon as we have a document actually out there, maybe even ahead of that," Ms. Nichols told reporters in Sacramento.

Gov. Gavin Newsom, a Democrat, said the

Trump administration was looking to serve the needs of oil companies and that state officials have fought similar battles with former presidents over its federal waivers.

"Since the day he got into office, we've been anticipating this move," Mr. Newsom said of Mr. Trump's tweets Wednesday.

The state's Democratic attorney general, Xavier Becerra, said the state's expertise and concerns over air pollution "are among the reasons why Congress granted our state the authority to combat our air pollution by setting our own standards for vehicle emissions way back."

Mr. Trump's actions also drew scrutiny from progressive nonprofits. Public Citizen, a Washington, D.C., advocacy group, said the move "will further impede efforts to combat global climate change even as the signs of impending climate disaster grow ever clearer."

The fight over California's emissions waiver is the latest in the state's ongoing battle with the Trump administration on a range of issues from immigration to climate change. The administration and California have also butted heads just this week over the state's ongoing housing crisis, with the Trump administration considering a plan to erect centers to house California's many homeless residents.

—Rebecca Ballhaus and Ben Foldy contributed to this article.

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