

ADVERTISEMENT

Federally funded climate projects in Mass. face uncertainty under Trump

Updated February 03, 2025 By [Barbara Moran](#) and [Miriam Wasser](#)



Solar panels on the roof of a building in Amesbury. (Robin Lubbock/WBUR)

Tina Quagliato Sullivan's eyes light up when she talks about the nearly [\\$20 million federal grant](#) Springfield won last year.

The money, one of many "[community change grants](#)" the Environmental Protection Agency awarded to disadvantaged communities, will cover an array of projects aimed at reducing pollution and blunting the effects of climate change. They include home weatherization and lead paint removal; a road improvement project; and converting two city buildings to geothermal energy, so they can serve as heating and cooling centers.

"None of these projects would really be possible without this funding," said Sullivan, Springfield's deputy development officer for housing, community services and sustainability.

Sullivan was about to make her first grant-related office hire when President Trump signed several sweeping executive actions, including one dubbed "[Unleashing American Energy](#)." Trump's directives set off a head-spinning series of government edicts, lawsuits, court orders, phone calls and emails from EPA headquarters, which froze, then unfroze — at least for now — access to federal funds.

The latest came Monday morning, when the EPA sent [an email](#) that seemed to allow grant recipients to move forward with funded projects. The email cited a [recent temporary restraining order](#) issued by a federal judge.

"There still remains an awful lot of unknowns, but for the time being, I think we're thrilled," Sullivan said. "We intend to move forward."

The reprieve may be temporary. Uncertainty lingers for this and many other projects, as Trump [works to unwind](#) some of the Biden Administration's signature environmental, climate and energy initiatives, many of which fall under the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

These initiatives include the EPA's [\\$7 billion Solar For All program](#), which awarded Massachusetts [\\$156 million](#) to help install solar panels in low-income communities. The EPA also recently awarded [\\$35 million to Boston](#) to expand its electric school bus fleet; [\\$3 million](#) to create a community advisory council in East Boston; and nearly [\\$500,000](#) for workforce development in Worcester.

Many of these projects seek to widen access to renewable energy and address disproportionate exposure to pollution and climate hazards among low-income communities and residents of color. The Trump administration has different priorities: promoting drilling for oil and gas, eliminating government subsidies for electric vehicles and charging stations, and curtailing funding for climate change and environmental justice initiatives.

ADVERTISEMENT

States, cities and nonprofits across the country that received EPA grants under former President Joe Biden [got an email on Jan. 28](#) telling them this money was on hold, pending a review of grants to ensure they align with the Trump administration's goals.

"Massachusetts and New England states were awarded over \$1 billion in investments to build a

more [resilient energy grid](#), [lower costs](#), and create thousands of jobs. We secured these funds through agreements with federal agencies, and those agreements should be honored by the new administration," Maria Hardiman, a spokesperson for the state's office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, wrote in an email.

For Sullivan, the process has been "incredibly unclear" and the possibility of the government reviewing — and possibly revoking — a signed contract is troubling.

"The best case scenario is that the federal government honors the executed binding contract that they signed with the city," she said. And the worst case scenario? The federal government decides not to honor the contract, she added, "and then the city explores its legal options."

Former EPA Regional Administrator David Cash said he's not surprised the Trump administration is "pushing the limits of what is legal," and he's concerned about the status of these grants.

"Even though the courts have said that the administration needs to follow through with these grants, if they don't, what happens then? What's the mechanism for enforcement and accountability?" he asked. "It's just an act of brazen, bad governance."

In a Jan. 28 email, an EPA spokesperson said the agency is "continuing to work diligently to implement President Trump's [Unleashing American Energy](#) Executive Order issued on January 20 in coordination with the Office of Management and Budget."

The EPA declined to offer further comment on Monday, instead referring questions to the Department of Justice, which also offered no comment.

Editor's note: This post has been updated with additional comments provided by the Massachusetts Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs.

This article was originally published on February 03, 2025.

Related:

- Trump has declared a 'national energy emergency.' What does that mean?
- Special program in Boston trains residents to become solar workers
- A new state study shows where solar is most suitable in Mass. — including your home
- A 2nd U.S. judge says Trump administration must pause its federal spending freeze
- Boston schools will expand their electric bus fleet with \$35 million grant

Barbara Moran Correspondent, Climate and Environment
Barbara Moran is a correspondent on WBUR's environmental team.
[More...](#)



Miriam Wasser Senior Reporter, Climate and Environment
Miriam Wasser is a reporter with WBUR's climate and environment team.
[More...](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

More from WBUR



ADVERTISEMENT

Contact Us

(617) 353-0909

info@wbur.org

890 Commonwealth Ave.
Boston, MA 02215

[More ways to get in touch.](#)

About WBUR

[Who We Are](#)

[Inside WBUR](#)

[Diversity, Equity And Inclusion](#)

[Board Of Directors](#)

[Community Advisory Board](#)

[CPB Transparency](#)

[Careers](#)

[WBUR Staff](#)

[Ethics Guide](#)

[Licensing WBUR Content](#)

Support WBUR

[Volunteer](#)

[Member Services](#)

[Become A Member](#)

[Donate Your Car](#)

[Join The Murrow Society](#)

[Become A Sponsor](#)

[Make A Donation](#)

Follow

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Linkedin](#)

© Copyright WBUR 2025

[WBUR Privacy Policy](#)

[Syndication](#)

[FCC Applications](#)

[FCC Public File](#)

[WBUR EEO Reports](#)

[Public File Assistance](#)

This site is protected by reCAPTCHA and the Google [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#) apply.



LISTEN LIVE