

Strangling Local Climate Action: Trump's Executive Order 14260 and the Fight for Binational Environmentalism

Executive Order 14260 is far from a symbolic rollback of environmental regulation, it's an aggressive structural dismantling of state-level environmental policy. The impacts will be most evident in states like California. This spells trouble for regions like the San Diego-Tijuana Bioregion, where environmental policy requires cross border jurisdictions and bureaucracies to function.

On April 8th, 2025, Executive Order 14260 claimed to "protect American energy" by preventing states from issuing "ideologically motivated" climate regulations. Framed by the administration as preserving national energy interest, it threatens to preempt state laws that conflict with federal energy production goals. In practice this executive order seeks to:

- Override State authority in implementing stricter environmental laws than those implemented on a federal level. (Ironic considering the Republican party's supposed advocacy for "state's rights", evidently it was never about the states.)
- Withhold access to federal grants if state agencies are seen as "non-cooperative" with national energy policies.

EO 14260 is not about streamlining governance or reducing bureaucratic inefficiencies. Instead, it is a politically charged attack on climate activism at the subnational level: not only protest movements or public demonstrations, but the full ecosystem of local and state-led environmentally prioritized action. The Fossil Fuel industry laughs as its investment into the Trump administration pays off in an increasing deregulated state. Their bottom line is protected as the frontier of environmental disaster is most threatened: we face the collective consequences. The purposefully broad language of the EO uses "overreach" to mask and enable a broader goal: the dismantling of environmental action and the reassertion of fossil fuel capital's unrestricted dominance over energy and land use planning.

California is uniquely vulnerable as it has operated as a climate sovereign within the federal system. This means that for decades, California has charted its own path on environmental regulation. Oftentimes, due to California's relatively progressive political agenda, exceeding federal standards and national precedents. Largely, its success has stemmed from regulatory innovation and relatively progressive political will. With EO 14260, California's authority to set more stringent emissions standards - including zero-emission vehicle mandates and carbon neutrality timelines once derived from waivers granted under the Clean Air Act - will be essentially void. California's renewable energy transition will be hamstrung by federal intervention because promoting fossil fuel extraction is in "conflict" with the national interest according to EO 14260.

Major climate policy and planning initiatives, including SB 100 (mandating 100% clean electricity by 2045), are now in legal limbo. If federal agencies determine that these initiatives interfere with the development of national fossil fuel assets, they will potentially face the chopping block. Moreover, EO 14260 carries deep fiscal implications for local agencies and NGOs that primarily

rely on government funding for climate adaptation. The financial leverage and threatening are more akin to extortion than political good-will. Crucial adaptation measures that positively enhance people's quality of life are being used as a tool for political discipline. Thus, EO 14260 has broader chilling effects on state and municipal regulators. Federal overstepping to withhold integral climate action is becoming the new status-quo. California's climate policy is not just an incidental casualty of EO 14260 but instead the primary target.

In the fragile ecological, social, and political landscape of the San-Diego Tijuana region, the consequences of this federal assault threaten to be uniquely severe. Here, environmental governance relies on deeply collaborative frameworks and intergovernmental trust. This particular vulnerability leaves a dynamic zone, with millions of residents, intricately dependent on shared infrastructure and funding initiatives. Historically, the U.S. federal government has led the conversation not just in rhetoric but with clear and targeted funding. Trump's undermining of this order leaves the region's environmental policy to unravel and be stifled into inaction.

EO 14260 jeopardizes a wide array of environmental programs that the region depends on. For one, State Climate Standards have moved the needle towards more aggressive emissions regulations. California's vehicle emissions regulations have been extensively successful in increasing more EVs. Additionally, Climate grants that focus on resilience planning, often distributed through FEMA are set to be denied to states "non-compliant" with non-DEI framing of the issue.

This executive order must be viewed as a call for local and binational resistance against clear aggressive action towards localized resilience to climate change. EO 14260 is not a mere bureaucratic reshuffle but a calculated assault on local autonomy. The future of the region depends on its ability to maintain autonomy in action towards the resolution of environmental issues.