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President Trump's executive order on American energy independence is a sweeping repudiation of Obama-era environmental initiatives, substituting a strategy of combating climate change through international cooperation for an America-first energy policy.

Trump proclaimed the order as "start of a new era in American energy and production and job creation" that would "restore economic freedom and allow our companies and our workers to thrive, compete, and succeed on a level playing field for the first time in a long time."

Trump spoke at a signing ceremony at the Environmental Protection Agency Tuesday on a stage with a dozen coal miners. "My administration is putting an end to the war on coal," he said. "I made them this promise. We will put our miners back to work."

Trump's order attempts to roll back Obama-era policies on power plant emissions limits, coal mining on federal lands, and regulations on fracking and methane. Because most of those rules were finalized under Obama, the Trump would have to start from the beginning on a rulemaking process to dismantle those regulations.

The most significant of those regulations is the Clean Power Plan, which put emissions limits on new and existing coal power plants. "Perhaps no single regulation threatens our miners, energy workers, and companies more than this crushing attack on American industry," Trump said.

Even further, the order also takes aim at the entire framework of climate change action under the previous administration. Under Obama, federal agencies were required to plan for and mitigate the future effects of climate change, treat it as a national security issue, and attempt to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions by 40%. With one executive order, Trump revoked four separate executive orders and presidential memoranda Obama signed over the last four years.

Trump's action also takes away the Obama "secret weapon" in energy regulations, known as the "social cost of carbon." By changing the way that future side effects of carbon emissions are accounted for, the Obama administration was able to use a cost-benefit analysis to justify many of its environmental regulations. Trump's order restores the previous policy, which discounts those future costs in relation to the present-day benefits of energy.

Environmental activists deplored the order. Annie Leonard of Greenpeace USA said it showed Trump is "just a fossil fuel industry stooge with a presidential pen."

But she also cast the executive order as a temporary setback. "Thankfully, for all his bluster, the best Trump can do is delay America’s inevitable transition to clean energy, but he can’t stop it," she said.

White House officials said Trump's action "will look back and it will look forward," providing the framework for a new Trump-era energy framework that will emphasize more production and more jobs.

And despite relaxing environmental standards, the White House argues that its energy policies can be good for the environment in the long term. "The president strongly believes that protecting the environment and promoting our economy are not mutually exclusive goals," press secretary Sean Spicer said Tuesday. "This executive order will help to ensure that we have clean air and clean water without sacrificing economic growth and job creation."

The order will ask all federal agencies to identify obstacles to domestic energy production, with a report back to the White House for future action. By reducing the federal role in regulation, Trump said the order is "returning power to the states, where that power belongs."

Former vice president Al Gore called the order "a misguided step away from a sustainable, carbon-free future for ourselves and generations to come."

"No one man or group can stop the encouraging and escalating momentum we are experiencing in the fight to protect our planet," Gore said.