

Endangering Generations

How the Trump Administration's Assault on Science Is Harming Children's Health

The federal government has traditionally worked hard to ensure future generations will enjoy an ever-improving quality of life. For example, when science has shown policymakers that certain practices or products are dangerous for children's health and safety, they have used that information to set safety standards that give kids the best chance to thrive. In the past three years, however, the Trump administration has put our children—and future generations—in harm's way by yielding to industry demands, enacting rollbacks of crucial health and safety protections, refusing to enforce current safeguards, and ignoring the science on a range of threats.

LEAD

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is failing to take strong action to regulate this potent neurotoxin. It has neglected to require the replacement of 6 million water service lines made of lead or to lower the level of lead at which the agency provides enforcement, and it *reduced by half* the percentage of lines that must be replaced in communities that have reached the enforcement level.

CHLORPYRIFOS

Against the advice of its own scientists, the EPA decided not to ban the use of this pesticide on farmland—though it has been banned from homes since 2000 because of the neurodevelopmental risks posed to children. A UCS analysis found that nearly 2 million children living in agricultural communities are likely facing increased risk of harm to their brains and nervous systems as a result.

PFAS

Despite evidence supporting the importance of regulating this class of chemicals used in products to repel water and grease, the EPA has not required their monitoring, testing, or cleanup, and has delayed the release of a government study suggesting that PFAS are more hazardous than previously known. A UCS analysis showed that nearly 3 million children attend schools or childcare facilities within five miles of a contaminated site.

ASBESTOS

The EPA disregarded the advice of more than a dozen of its own scientists and lawyers, who recommended that the United States follow the example of 60 other nations and ban the import of this cancer-causing mineral. Childhood exposure to asbestos greatly increases the risk of mesothelioma because of the greater length of time the substance remains in the body.

FOOD SAFETY

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) is allowing some poultry and pork manufacturers to increase the speed of lines where workers inspect meat for contamination. Pork processing facilities will also have fewer federal inspectors on site and less frequent testing. These changes will lead to more contaminated meat in homes, and children are more susceptible to foodborne illnesses.

PRODUCT SAFETY

The Consumer Product Safety Commission is fining fewer companies for misconduct and issuing fewer product recalls. Since eliminating its children's product defect team in 2018, recalls of children's products have dropped to their lowest level in more than a decade.

AIR POLLUTION

Numerous Trump administration decisions have attempted to weaken regulations designed to decrease air pollution from sources such as coal-fired power plants, oil and natural gas facilities, vehicular traffic, and industrial facilities. Children exposed to higher levels of air pollution can develop serious health problems affecting their lungs and brains.



Javier Sua and his family live in the San Joaquin Valley, where high levels of particulate matter and other air pollutants harm children's developing lungs and lead to asthma and other ailments. Javier, who has asthma (and is shown here using his inhaler), is not allowed to play outside when pollution levels are too high.

The federal government is responsible for safeguarding the lives and health of children, but the current administration chooses to put our children in harm's way.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The Trump administration has dismissed climate science, avoided taking action, and moved to pull the United States out of the Paris climate agreement, despite overwhelming evidence that climate impacts have already begun and will severely worsen over time. That means children will bear the brunt of the long-term risks.

FOOD INSECURITY

Despite the proven benefits of federal food programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Trump administration has made decisions that will drastically reduce the number of people enrolled. Losing access to SNAP would mean less support for food-insecure families and more children living in poverty.

CHILD DETENTION

The Trump administration has attempted to roll back child welfare standards and protections for children at the US-Mexico border to discourage entry into the United States. This has led to thousands of migrant children being held in detention at any given time, and an estimated 5,400 children forcibly separated from their parents while attempting to find safety in this country.

What You Can Do

The federal government has the responsibility to safeguard the lives and health of children, but the current administration chooses to put our children in harm's way. This has forced children themselves to take the lead on building political

power and driving home the urgency of threats ranging from climate change to contaminated drinking water—but it shouldn't have to be this way.

The impact that Trump administration actions will have on children's health should be a wake-up call for decisionmakers. Raise your voice to let your representatives know that you demand action—here are a few ways to go about it:

- Read the full Union of Concerned Scientists report at <http://act.ucsusa.org/endangering> and share the information on social media using the #ProtectKids hashtag.
- Learn more about the issues covered in the report by checking out our resource guide at <http://act.ucsusa.org/protecting-kids>.
- Talk to your elected officials about what they're doing to protect children's health; for tips go to <https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/meet-your-member-congress>.
- At town halls and hearings, educate the public, government officials, and political candidates about the importance of using science to protect children's health. To raise these issues in the context of the upcoming election, see <https://sciencerising.org>.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper; we have advice at <https://www.ucsusa.org/writingLTEs>.

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Union of **Concerned Scientists**

FIND THE FULLY REFERENCED REPORT ONLINE:

www.ucsusa.org/resources/endangering-generations

The Union of Concerned Scientists puts rigorous, independent science to work to solve our planet's most pressing problems. Joining with people across the country, we combine technical analysis and effective advocacy to create innovative, practical solutions for a healthy, safe, and sustainable future.

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