

In addition to asbestos deregulation, the Environmental Protection Agency has also removed restrictions on other pollutants, such as those in the vehicle industry. Former agency director Scott Pruitt announced on his last day in office that the agency will remove production limits on “super-polluting” glider trucks. As part of the current deregulatory trend, the national production cap of 300 glider trucks per year will cease by 2019.

Glider trucks use older engines manufactured before the advent of modern emissions standards. Originally designed to repurpose the engines of damaged trucks, smaller fleets have now adopted glider trucks due to their low cost of operation. Nevertheless, the vehicles are up to fifty-five times more polluting than modern trucks, releasing copious amounts of particulates and nitrogen oxide that contribute to lung cancer and asthma. Notably, the annual level of production unleashes thirteen times more particulate matter than did all the Volkswagen cars from the 2017 emissions scandal. In addition to health considerations, glider trucks contribute to climate change more than other vehicles.

The EPA decision came after intense lobbying by the glider truck industry. Prior to the ruling, Fitzgerald Glider Kits Inc. donated tens of thousands of dollars to Diane Black (R. TN), who in turn encouraged Pruitt to pass the ruling. Fitzgerald had produced over three thousand glider trucks in 2015. Scott Pruitt and acting director Andrew Wheeler also have ties to industry; Pruitt worked in oil and gas, while Wheeler was a lobbyist for coal giant Murray Energy.

Ultimately, the regulatory change has spawned backlash from environmental groups such as the Environmental Defense Fund and the American Lung Association. Vickie Patton, general counsel at the EDF, announced that “Pruitt and Wheeler are creating a loophole for super polluting freight trucks that will fill our children’s lungs with toxic diesel pollution, ignoring public comments from moms and leading businesses across the country.” The deregulatory measures counter a two-decade, bipartisan push to reduce vehicle emissions.

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