

Testimony of Martha Roberts, Environmental Defense Fund

EPA's Hearing on Proposed Rule: Repeal of Emission Requirements for Glider Vehicles, Glider Engines, and Glider Kits

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My name is Martha Roberts. I am an attorney with Environmental Defense Fund. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I am here on behalf of Environmental Defense Fund's over two million members and supporters to oppose any rollback, any delay, or any weakening of pollution limits for super-polluting glider trucks.

I think we've all been stuck behind heavy-duty freight trucks belching black soot while driving. That thick, black soot looks bad for you, and it is bad for you.

We see less and less of that these days, thanks to common sense standards from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that protect us from this harmful, excessive pollution.

But that progress is now at risk. Administrator Scott Pruitt's proposal to reopen a loophole would allow the sale of super-polluting glider trucks that lack modern pollution controls. This is an unconscionable, irrational step that would allow an unlimited number of these dangerous, outdated freight trucks on the road. Anyone who likes to breathe air should be concerned.

Let's talk first about the amount of pollution at stake. It is staggering. Super-polluting glider trucks emit harmful soot and smog-causing pollutants – including oxides of nitrogen and particulate matter, as well as cancer-causing diesel particulate – at a rate *forty times* that of new engines.¹

If this loophole is reopened, EPA estimates that by 2025 glider trucks would comprise just five percent of the nation's heavy-duty freight truck fleet, but they would cause *one third* of the fleet's air pollution.²

This pollution puts lives at risk. Data that Administrator Pruitt's own agency has collected shows that reopening the loophole could result in as many as 6,400 premature deaths from soot pollution, just from the glider trucks sold through 2021.³ And this assessment is actually conservative, as it doesn't account for the health harms from cancer-causing diesel particulate pollution or from smog formation caused by these super-polluting trucks.

This proposal is a grave, immediate threat to public health.

Meanwhile, Administrator Pruitt's action to reopen this loophole goes against the stated wishes of other freight truck manufacturers and dealers,⁴ who responsibly invested in pollution control equipment and depend on a level playing field for the well-being of their businesses and the Americans they employ. Many of their representatives are here today to oppose this rollback.

For example, here's what freight truck dealership Nuss Trucks had to say:

¹ EPA, Frequently Asked Questions about Heavy-Duty "Glider Vehicles" and "Glider Kits", <https://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPDF.cgi/P100MUVI.PDF?Dockey=P100MUVI.PDF>.

² 81 Fed. Reg. 73,478, 73,943 (Oct. 25, 2016), <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-10-25/pdf/2016-21203.pdf>.

³ EPA and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Response to Comments at 1965, <https://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPDF.cgi/P100P8IS.PDF?Dockey=P100P8IS.PDF>.

⁴ https://www.edf.org/sites/default/files/content/trucking_industry_leaders_on_glidern.pdf.

The original intent of selling glider [trucks] has moved from a rebuilding mechanism to now mainly evading diesel emissions EPA mandates.⁵

Volvo, the manufacturer of MAC Trucks, noted that the availability of “glider trucks” is creating: [A]n unlevel playing field for manufacturers of new vehicles designed and certified to be compliant to all current emissions, fuel efficiency, and safety regulations.⁶

Why is Administrator Pruitt giving the glider industry special treatment over responsible freight truck manufacturers — and over the health of American families? Administrator Pruitt granted a glider industry request to reconsider the standards after a meeting with a major glider manufacturer in May. That same manufacturer prominently hosted an event for Donald Trump early in his presidential campaign.

Administrator Pruitt’s attempt to repeal these important safeguards reeks of political cronyism, and is being done at the expense of public health. Families and communities across America will be exposed to the dangerous pollution from thousands more of these dirty freight trucks on our highways.

It is important to remember the larger context. This rollback is one part of a larger onslaught of attacks that the Pruitt Administration is carrying out against vital pollution protections at the behest of politically connected major polluters. Right now, EPA also has an open comment period on rolling back the Clean Power Plan, America’s only nation-wide limit on carbon pollution from power plants. And Administrator Pruitt is also moving ahead on numerous other rollbacks of safeguards that protect Americans from dangerous pollution.

Administrator Pruitt is putting American families at risk from dirty tailpipes and dirty smokestacks. I urge this Administration to remember EPA’s core mission—to protect Americans from pollution—and reject wholesale rollbacks of common sense safeguards that protect Americans, including glider truck pollution limits.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

⁵ <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=EPA-HQ-OAR-2014-0827-0922>.

⁶ <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=EPA-HQ-OAR-2014-0827-1966>.