

# THE BUFFALO NEWS

ANOTHER VOICE

## Citizens, states must fight against weakening of EPA

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**By Another Voice**

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How about some good news? For those of a certain vintage, you may remember the 1960s and 1970s' suffocating Los Angeles smog, the Buffalo River fires, “dead” Lake Dreary (Erie), acid rain and the depleted ozone layer. DDT and other chemical fiascoes did their damage.

Millions of people, both political parties working across the aisle, and President Richard Nixon took their outrage to amazing legislative levels. Earth Day and the EPA were both born in 1970. The Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act and the Toxic Substances Control Act followed in short order. Generally, the air, water and the environment at large have improved.

This paved the way for a new awareness concerning many environmental issues, including recycling, farm-to-table platforms, plant, animal, nature preservation and campaigns to fight for environmental justice.

But complacency can be very deadly and dangerous. Take, for instance, the EPA. The Trump administration has stacked the EPA leadership with people from the gas/oil/chemical industries and major corporations. Lower fuel standards, mercury emissions, oil exploitation and the degradation of nature in general have become the attempted norm. Oil and gas companies, mines, lumber and ranching interests are nipping away at the protection of our national treasures. All of the natural world is at risk. And there's the absurdity of climate-denying.

As of late, the Trump administration called for a drastic rollback of the EPA's ability to enforce existing rules and regulations. The EPA will rely on businesses and industries to self-report any abuses. Fines will not be collected, resulting in little or no consequences for any violators. During the past three years, various environmental groups have filed hundreds of challenges and lawsuits charging Trump's EPA with failing to perform its legal obligation to protect Americans' health, safety and well-being.

With the current pandemic threatening the health and lives of every American, this hostile takeover of the EPA will undoubtedly lead to more premature deaths and result in the further degradation of our quality of life. Covid-19 has exposed the open wounds of the inequalities systemic in the U.S. This move (and many others) by President Trump is the antithesis of any semblance of social justice.

The Clean Air Coalition calls upon New York Attorney General Letitia James, in concert with other states AGs, to sue Trump's EPA for its criminal and unethical use of the EPA. We'll work with Basil Seggos, DEC's commissioner, all of our political leaders, the multitude of environmental organizations and groups who daily fight for a just and equitable society, to reestablish the EPA as a valuable government entity that fulfills the very essence of its name.

All citizens are called to join the battle. Let's make this 50th anniversary of the EPA and Earth Day mean something.

*Gary M. Schulenberg is Buffalo campaign leader for the Clean Air Coalition.*

