

# Supreme Court deals blow to Obama climate plan

February 10 2016, by Sébastien Blanc

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A coalition of 27 US states are suing in a lower court to halt Obama's Clean Power Plan, and petitioned the Supreme Court to suspend its implementation until the case is resolved

The US Supreme Court has put on hold a sweeping plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from coal-fueled power plants, dealing a significant blow to President Barack Obama's efforts to rein in climate change.

A coalition of 27 US states—most of them run by Obama's Republican adversaries—is suing in a lower court to halt Obama's Clean Power Plan, and petitioned the Supreme Court to suspend its implementation until the case is resolved.

The White House said it was disappointed in the ruling, but convinced the ambitious plan to slash US emissions was based on a strong legal foundation, and would prevail.

"We disagree with the Supreme Court's decision to stay the Clean Power Plan while litigation proceeds," spokesman Josh Earnest said in a statement issued after the five-to-four ruling.

"We remain confident that we will prevail on the merits."

Tuesday's ruling, backed by five of the nine Supreme Court justices, halts the rollout of rules that require the power sector's [carbon dioxide emissions](#) to be slashed by at least 32 percent compared to 2005 levels by the year 2030.

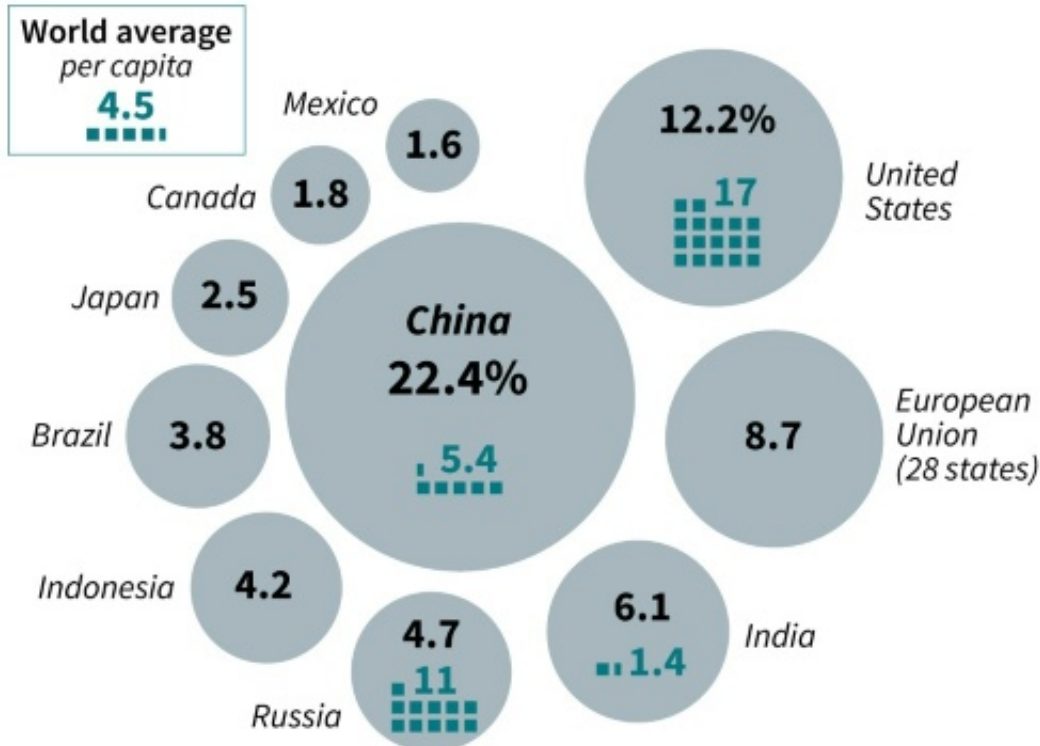
The far-reaching regulations issued last year by the Environmental Protection Agency are central to Obama's drive to reduce overall US [greenhouse gas emissions](#).

## Top greenhouse gas emitters



70% of all carbon emissions come from just 10 sources

● % of world total    ■■ emissions per habitant in tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent



Sources: World Resources Institute (percentages for 2012 including land use change and forestry - LUCF); Climate Analytics (per capita emissions for 2010 excluding LUCF)



The world's top 10 greenhouse gas emitters, with carbon emissions as a percentage of total global emissions and in tonnes per capita. 90 x 85 mm

"Even while the litigation proceeds, EPA has indicated it will work with states that choose to continue plan development," Earnest said.

California's Democratic Governor Jerry Brown—who is part of a coalition of states defending the emissions plan—said as much, as he accused the justices of acting "tone-deaf" faced with the threat of "irreversible [climate change](#)."

"This arbitrary roadblock does incalculable damage and undermines America's climate leadership," he said in a statement.

"But make no mistake, this won't stop California from continuing to do its part under the Clean Power Plan."

Democratic White House hopeful Bernie Sanders voiced bitter disappointment at the ruling, shortly before he was declared winner of the key New Hampshire presidential primary.

"The Supreme Court's decision is deeply disappointing. There's no time to spare in the fight to combat climate change," he tweeted.

The court's four liberal justices—Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan—also voiced their firm dissent.

But West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey hailed it as a major victory against efforts to regulate the coal industry.



New Environmental Protection Agency rules have incensed Republicans, particularly lawmakers from coal-producing states, who say the economic cost of the endeavor would cripple industry

"Hope. Coal miners and their families should have more hope tonight after our unprecedented victory at the US Supreme Ct. We stayed the CPP!" tweeted Morrissey, whose state leads a group opposing the Obama plan.

## **Republicans cry victory**

The federal program was a central part of the commitments put forward by Washington ahead of the Paris climate deal struck by 195 governments in December.

But many US conservatives deny outright that climate change is caused

by human industry and agriculture, and have opposed emissions controls designed to slow global warming.

The EPA rules have incensed Republicans, particularly lawmakers from coal-producing states, who say the economic cost of the endeavor would cripple industry and hike energy costs for millions of Americans.

Republicans in Congress late last year voted through two so-called disapproval resolutions on the regulations, dealing a largely symbolic yet blunt rebuke to Obama.

The Republican leader in the House of Representatives, Kevin McCarthy, thanked the Supreme Court for stopping an "illegitimate abuse of power".

"The administration's regulations would kill jobs, increase costs, and decrease the reliability of our energy supply," he charged.

"That's not what America needs."

Likewise, House Speaker Paul Ryan called it "a victory for the American people and our economy."

"President Obama's attempt to remake the country's entire energy sector to further his own climate agenda is more than costly, it's unlawful," the Republican said.

Obama has relied heavily on the EPA to drive through measures on climate change since failing to secure congressional adoption of a broad energy package early in his presidency.

But the powerful agency is viewed with suspicion if not outright hostility by part of the Republican camp.

In practice, the EPA will be barred from implementing the emissions rules while an appeals court weighs the case filed by the state plaintiffs—a delay that risks limiting Obama's ability to cement the reform before he leaves the White House.

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Citation: Supreme Court deals blow to Obama climate plan (2016, February 10) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-02-supreme-court-obama-climate.html>

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