

The Thin Green Line: December 2019 Environmental Integrity Project Report Addresses State Pollution Control Agencies' Funding



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The Environmental Integrity Project ("EIP") published a December 5, 2019, report titled:

The Thin Green Line: Cuts in State Pollution Control Agencies Threaten Public Health ("Report")

The EIP *Report* examines state pollution control agencies' spending and staffing in the lower 48 U.S. states during the time period 2008-2018.

The *Report* argues that the United States Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA") is shifting greater responsibility to the states for implementing/enforcing various environmental programs is problematic. The concern expressed is EIP's view that the states do not have the staffing or funding to adequately carry out these responsibilities. This is premised on the argument that both EPA and the majority of state environmental agencies have or are suffering significant funding and staffing reductions.

The past 10 years are stated to have seen both Congress and the White House cut EPA funding for pollution control and science by 16% (adjusted for inflation). Further, the federal agency's workforce is stated to have been reduced by 16% through the elimination of 2,699 positions.

The *Report* also examines state environmental agency funding and puts forth the following conclusions:

- Thirty states reduced the funding for their environmental agencies' pollution control programs. Twenty-five imposed cuts of at least 10 percent, while 16 slashed funding by more than 20 percent when adjusted for inflation.
- Although climate change and coastal flooding are having a growing impact, six of the 10 states with the sharpest cuts to their environmental agencies are coastal states that are disproportionately hurt by rising sea levels, including North Carolina, Louisiana, and New York.
- Forty states reduced the staffing levels at their environmental agencies over this decade. Twenty-one states cut their environmental workforce by at least 10 percent, and nine of those eliminated at least 20 percent.
- The only state reporting significant growth was California, where officials boosted state spending on the California Environmental Protection Agency's budget by 75 percent between fiscal 2008 and 2018, adding 1,255 pollution-control staff.
- Overall, states eliminated more than 4,400 position at agencies responsible for protecting the environment. If California's numbers are not included, the remaining states for which data are

available shed a total of 5,705 pollution control positions over a decade, or about 14 percent of their total state workforce in this sector.

The Appendix to the *Report* has detailed information for each state. Note that Arkansas is a state that is listed as not suffering a decrease in budgeting for its state environmental agency (Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality ["ADEQ"]) over the 2008-2018 period. The EIP Report lists an 18.3% increase for ADEQ over this time period.

A copy of the *Report* can be downloaded [here](#).