



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on September 23, 2011

The Case for Ending the EPA

This attitude is no surprise. The one exception to the law that it's easier to destroy than create is big government programs and bureaucracies. Once they're the status quo and people become accustomed to their existence, folks just cannot imagine how they could live without them. But is it really true that we'd [get a visit](#) from the Smog Monster if the EPA went extinct? And does it really advance the good on balance? Let's examine the matter.

Just recently, the EPA [decreed](#) that New York City must place a concrete cover over a 90-acre reservoir in nearby Yonkers — to the tune of \$1.6 *billion*. Now, the city, nanny state though it is, strongly objected to the mandate. The Big Apple just didn't have the money, and, besides, its own department of environmental protection (NYCDEP) stated that such a move would offer the public a negligible benefit at best.



While NYC can now happily report that the federal order is "under review," such silly, intrusive mandates are par for the course for the EPA. For example, in April, EPA regulations forced Shell Oil to abandon a five-year, four-billion-dollar investment and its plan to drill for oil in the Arctic Ocean off the Alaskan coast. Of course, this isn't as bad for Shell as it is for the rest of us. The oil company can always devote itself to developing overseas energy resources, but American jobs are now lost and we'll be sending more greenbacks to terrorist-spawning countries.

Then there are cases in which EPA actions actually cause contamination. Providing a classic example, economics professor Thomas DiLorenzo [wrote](#):

Congress ruled that all sewage treatment plants must remove at least 30% of the organic waste from incoming sewage. For Anchorage, Alaska, this is nearly impossible to achieve because the city has little organic matter to remove. Anchorage's sewage inflow often is cleaner than what the city's plant is allowed to emit.

The EPA was not flexible, telling Anchorage that it must meet the 30% standard. The city could have spent \$135,000,000 on a new sewage treatment plant to meet the standard, but discovered a much cheaper option. It invited two local fish-processing plants to dump 5,000 pounds of fish viscera into the sewer system. The fish waste was easy to remove and Anchorage thus met the 30% rule.

And given that we have a federal government that buys [16-dollar muffins](#), it's not surprising that the above wasn't Leviathan's only attempt to spread the waste around. Just consider, for instance, the 1990s case in which the EPA forced Indians in Alaska to spend \$29,500 on each of five outhouses. The jack-booted greenies at the agency must have been really proud of their handiwork, too, as they, [wrote](#)



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DiLorenzo, “promised to forget about \$750,000 in fines that had accumulated if the builders *did not mention publicly the agency’s involvement in the incident* [emphasis added].” I guess bad press and outhouses could give the public the idea that the EPA should be flushed down the toilet.

And it should. You see, we can talk about EPA excesses and get outraged. We can argue about how many regulations are necessary. We can point out that having a federal environmental agency is as unconstitutional as a federal religious-compliance agency. But what’s certainly unnecessary is to lose sleep worrying that we’ll have to add toxic-waste suits to our wardrobe if the EPA is no more. This is for a very simple reason: States — and often localities — already have their own environmental agencies. The NYCDEP is just one example.

So why do we have different levels of government all doing the same thing? Why the expensive duplication in a time of budget crunches?

Moreover, shouldn’t regulations pertaining to a given region be established by those close to that region? After all, who cares more about the water and air in New York than New Yorkers? Who cares more about the environment in Arizona than Arizonans? The decisions in question here shouldn’t be farmed out to nameless, faceless bureaucrats in Washington. When they are, we see decisions such as the one that [forced](#) Columbus, Ohio, to spend money testing for a pesticide only used 4,500 miles away — on pineapples in Hawaii.

Politicians often wring their hands and wonder how we can balance our federal budget with spending cuts alone. Well, a good start would be to dispose of an economically toxic type of waste, one that has an \$8.4 billion annual budget. It’s called the EPA.



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