

Americans, including Utahns, are being forced to sit at a smorgasbord of anti-environment, anti-health, anti-science, unconstitutional federal edicts by de facto President Elon Musk. Senate President Stuart Adams likes what he sees, [saying](#) “President Trump's moving forward, and it's not going to be business as usual, and I think some of it's actually refreshing.” Rather than “refreshing,” a better description is “breathtaking,” literally. And the Utah legislature is serving dessert--more anti-democratic, anti-environmental gruel.

EPA regulates how much poison contaminates your air, food, and water. They are far from perfect, they invariably capitulate to political and industry pressure, so their regulations are never strict enough. But EPA regulations are far better than nothing. Musk has embarked on a nihilistic Blitzkrieg on the EPA, health agencies, and medical science in general. He says, [“Environmental regulations are...largely terrible.”](#) Musk claims Trump can just unilaterally [not enforce](#) EPA regulations, and he is [already ignoring court rulings](#), adding a constitutional crisis to an environmental crisis. He’s even [threatening federal judges](#).

Russell Vought, Trump’s Office of Management and Budget director [said](#),”...they [EPA] are increasingly viewed as the villains. We want their funding to be shut down so that the EPA can't do all of the rules against our energy industry because they have no bandwidth financially to do so. We want to put them in trauma.” And that’s exactly what’s unfolding. [The first of the millions](#) of federal employees that Musk traumatized and threatened to fire were EPA employees. More than [1,100 EPA employees](#), whose jobs are to address the climate crisis, control air pollution, and replace lead pipes among many others, could be fired immediately. EPA staff has been steadily whittled down over 20 years, with already [2,500 less employees](#) than in 2004.

The human caused climate crisis has been proven in [99.9% of climate research](#), dating back to [1807](#), and called the [greatest public health threat](#) of the 21st century by the world’s top 200 medical journals. Within minutes of inauguration, Trump’s Administration began [removing essential climate change information](#) and data from agency websites, withdrew from the [Paris Climate Accord](#), the [World Health Organization](#), and is [attacking the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#).

Musk is permanently harming [American medical research](#). Besides [throwing researchers out on the street](#) and ruining research in progress, victims of Musk’s “government efficiency” chain saw includes anyone who might ever in their lifetime benefit from government funded medical research, including cancer research. “This is a surefire way to cripple lifesaving research and innovation,” said [Matt Owens](#), president of an association of academic medical centers and research institutes. Jeffrey Flier, former dean of Harvard Medical School, said, “A sane government would [never do this](#),” The University of Utah will [lose \\$50 million](#) in research grants.

Musk blocked public [communications from all federal health agencies](#), despite a measles [epidemic in Texas](#), an [historic tuberculosis epidemic](#) in Kansas, and the evolving bird flu epidemic that one expert says could be as [deadly as the 1918 influenza pandemic](#).

An Ebola outbreak [is underway](#) in Uganda. The Marburg virus (an Ebola variant with a [mortality rate of 88%](#)), is now spreading in Tanzania. An outbreak of an Ebola-like, Chapare hemorrhagic fever is spreading in Bolivia. Three weeks ago USAID [would have been stepping up to help control these epidemics](#). But Musk proudly has declared, “We’re shutting it [USAID] down.” The viruses will now have free reign to kill, maim, and spread to other countries, like the US. Thousands of people in poor countries are stranded in the middle of USAID funded research with experimental vaccines, drugs and devices in their bodies designed to treat deadly diseases, like malaria and HIV, [now have no access to researchers, to monitoring, or to care](#) of any kind, and the research has been destroyed.

Severely unqualified Robert F. Kennedy will run Trump’s Health and Human Services. He’s [right about fluoridation](#) and too many chemicals in our food, but the rest of his agenda is almost witchcraft.

Our legislature seems eager to follow Musk’s lead. They remain far too committed to [dirty energy](#). They are beating their chests that Utah can just ignore federal regulations, like on [air pollution](#).

Two current bills would make it easier to open and expand gravel pits, exposing more people to constant dust ([HB85](#), and [HB355](#)), and make it more difficult to stop a huge mine in Parley’s Canyon. Following the lead of the unconstitutional power grabs by the White House, [HB499](#), [SB203](#), [SB204](#), and [SB73](#) are the latest power grabs by Utah legislators to tighten control of over the Air Quality Board, muzzle public ballot initiatives, and challenge their decisions in court on environmental and any other issues.

Sen. Adams was right, this is not business as usual, its much worse. Like never before your health has become inseparable from the health of our democracy. I suggest you let your legislators know you care about both.

Commentary by [Brian Moench](#), M.D., board president of Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment.