



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on February 4, 2011

Media Outlets Misreport on GE Receiving EPA Exemption

In January, the Environmental Protection Agency began implementing its controversial greenhouse gas regulations for power plants and polluters for the first time in history. Critics of the regulations assert that they will slow down economic recovery, and are expensive jobs-killers. It should come as no surprise then that readers were angered to discover in an article published by the *Washington Examiner*, that just a month after the regulations began, the Obama administration began handing out exemptions to certain companies, the first of which was the very loyal General Electric. As it turns out, however, the *Examiner* story, entitled "Obama Issues Global Warming Rules in January, Gives GE Exemption in February," is entirely false.



In 2007, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Environmental Protection Agency has the authority to regulate greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act, after which the EPA immediately announced that it would be clamping down on greenhouse emissions of power plants and oil refineries.

As is typically the case, exemptions are expected to be made for the regulations. Both *Greenwire* and the *Washington Examiner* falsely reported that General Electric was the first company to receive the exemption, as the company's boss, Jeffrey Immelt, now leads President Obama's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness. (Unfortunately, in an earlier version of this report, *The New American* picked up this false information from a source that is usually reliable concerning basic factual data.)

[Greenwire](#) wrote:

The Obama administration will spare a stalled power plant project in California from the newest federal limits on greenhouse gases and conventional air pollution, U.S. EPA says in a new court filing that marks a policy shift in the face of industry groups and Republicans accusing the agency of holding up construction of large industrial facilities.

According to a declaration by air chief Gina McCarthy, officials reviewed EPA policies and decided it was appropriate to "grandfather" projects such as the Avenal Power Center, a proposed 600-megawatt power plant in the San Joaquin Valley, so they are exempted from rules such as new air quality standards for smog-forming nitrogen dioxide (NO₂).

Of the Avenal Power Center, *Greenwire* added:

The proposed Avenal Energy project will be a combined-cycle generating plant consisting of two natural gas-fired General Electric 7FA Gas Turbines with Heat Recovery Steam Generators



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(HRSG) and one General Electric Steam Turbine.

Picking up on the story, Tim Carney of the *Washington Examiner* addressed what he perceived could simply be a very strange coincidence:

Maybe GE CEO Jeff Immelt's closeness to President Obama, and his broad support for Obama's agenda, had nothing to do with this exemption. But we have no way of knowing that, and given the administration's record of regularly misleading Americans regarding lobbyists frankly, I wouldn't trust the White House if they told me there was no connection. On the upside, at least Job Czar Immelt is creating jobs!

According to General Electric, however, there is no truth to the story whatsoever. The company writes:

Yesterday *The Washington Examiner* told its readers that GE had received an exemption from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under new clean air rules for a power plant being built in California, the Avenal Power Center project. This story was picked up by a number of other media outlets and political commentators, who were critical of GE for allegedly seeking and receiving the waiver.

In fact, GE received no exemption and had nothing to do with the waiver being issued. The EPA provided the waiver to the project developer. GE is not building the plant and did not advocate for the waiver.

GE's connection to the project is that it submitted a bid for turbines. While GE would welcome the opportunity to provide our high-efficiency, advanced turbine technology for the proposed project, we have not been asked to provide any equipment to date.

By contrast, *Energy and Environment News*, which first reported the story and was the source for the *Examiner's* own story, did not contain these errors. EEN's original story was republished via *Greenwire* in the *New York Times*.

Though the relationship between the Obama administration and General Electric has been [questionable](#) at times, and can be said to be evidential of government and big corporation collusion, reports that General Electric has received preferential treatment in the form of an EPA exemption appear to be false. There are certainly enough instances in which General Electric and the Obama administration have proven to be in [cahoots](#) without having to bring falsities to the table to belabor the point any further.

Meanwhile, Republicans are in the process of introducing [legislation](#) that would eliminate the authority of the EPA to regulate greenhouse gas emissions. A vote is expected to take place on the measure sometime before spring.



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