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A 2023 study found that 75% of college students feel free to report their professors if they say something objectionable. Self-identified liberal students were more likely than conservative students to report their professors to the administration. GETTY IMAGES

## Student informants spur academic freedom debate

Classroom speech, rights of educators and pupils under scrutiny

Austin Sarat  
Amherst College  
THE CONVERSATION

Texas A&M University told philosophy professor Martin Peterson in early January that he could not teach some of Greek philosopher Plato's writings that touch on "race and gender ideology."

The university's local chapter of the American Association of University Professors, an organization of profes-

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sors and academics in the United States, quickly denounced this requirement.

Peterson, in response to his university's direction, replaced the Plato readings with material on free speech and

academic freedom.

Silencing a professor from teaching a certain subject fits within what experts have long recognized as encroaching on academic freedom.

In another high-profile incident at Texas A&M in September, a student filmed an exchange with an English literature professor, Melissa McCoul, who was talking about gender identity.

The student said that McCoul was violating President Donald Trump's January 2025 executive order that recognized "women are biologically female, and men are biologically male." As a result, the student told her

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## Obama criticizes repeal of EPA's climate finding

Joey Garrison  
USA TODAY

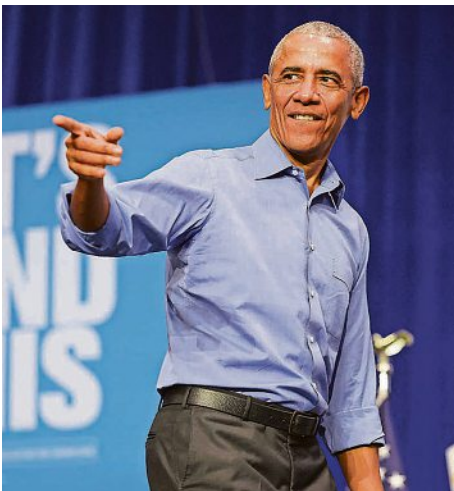
WASHINGTON – Former President Barack Obama slammed the Trump administration's repeal of a landmark climate finding from the Democrat's presidency, saying the United States is "less safe" after President Donald Trump eliminated the legal basis for federal regulations targeting greenhouse gases.

In a major blow to federal efforts to combat climate change, the Environmental Protection Agency, at Trump's direction, rescinded the EPA's "endangerment finding" on

Feb. 12, which was signed during the Obama administration in 2019.

The finding stated that greenhouse gases in the atmosphere "threaten the public health and welfare of current and future generations," providing the legal underpinning for EPA actions during the Obama and Biden administrations to regulate greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act. But with its elimination, greenhouse gases emitted from tailpipes on vehicles and factories are no longer subject to regulations from the federal government.

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Former President Barack Obama has criticized the Trump administration's decision to repeal the Environmental Protection Agency's "endangerment finding" that was signed during Obama's administration in 2019.

KYLIE COOPER/REUTERS FILE

## Pride flag raised again at NYC's Stonewall

Swapna Venugopal Ramaswamy  
USA TODAY

NEW YORK – In defiance of a Trump administration edict, New York City officials and activists raised the rainbow pride flag again on Feb. 12 at the Stonewall National Monument, the birthplace of the LGBTQ+ rights movement, after it was removed over the weekend by the National Park Service.

Located across from the historic Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village, the national civil rights monument was established in 2016 by President Barack Obama.

One attendee attempted to pull down the adjacent U.S. flag, as some chanted "take it down" and "burn the American flag." Others chanted "we will not be erased."

The local elected officials left immediately after the pride flag was raised and did not give speeches.

Participants also briefly considered raising a "Progress Flag," which includes stripes in an arrow shape, representing members of the transgender community and communities of color, as well as those living with AIDS, on top of the traditional LGBTQ+ rainbow flag.

One day before the planned re-raising of the flag, the NPS installed an American flag on the flagpole.

When the elected officials arrived on Feb. 12, they brought a flagpole with them, which they tied to the existing flagpole and raised the pride flag. The new flagpole was shorter and the pride flag flew below the American flag.

The activists were not happy.

"So it ended up being with the American flag overshadowing our flag, and our community was incensed," said Jay Walker, an activist who is the co-founder of the Queer Liberation March and the president of Gays Against Guns.

'Bullying trans people'

Chloe Elantari, a transgender woman who lives in the East Village, arrived at the 0.12-acre Christopher Park around noon, hours before the planned re-hoisting of the flag at 4 p.m.

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