

[wsj.com](https://www.wsj.com)

Virginia Passed a Law Adopting California's EV Standards. Now It Wants Out.

Joseph De Avila

3–4 minutes

Virginia is backing away from electric-vehicle requirements that would have forced the state to phase out the sale of new gasoline-powered vehicles by 2035.

Gov. Glenn Youngkin, a Republican, said Wednesday that Virginia, starting in 2025, would no longer follow the emissions standards set by California and would instead abide by less-strict federal rules. Many Democratic-leaning states use emissions policies set by California, which has a waiver that allows it to determine its own requirements separate from the federal government's.

Virginia approved legislation in 2021—signed by then-Gov. Ralph Northam, a Democrat—to adopt California's standards. But Youngkin, citing a legal opinion by the state's Attorney General Jason Miyares, said that the state wasn't required to follow [a new set of standards California adopted in 2022](#). The newer standards established thresholds for the sales of new zero-emission electric vehicles that start at 35% in 2026 and reach 100% by 2035.

“The idea that government should tell people what kind of car they

can or can't purchase is fundamentally wrong," Youngkin said. "Virginians deserve the freedom to choose which vehicles best fit the needs of their families and businesses."

Virginia's rejection of California's EV rules comes as consumer demand for zero-emission vehicles [has fallen off](#). Automakers have been recalibrating their [plans for new EV models](#) and [investments in battery factories](#) to match weaker-than-expected consumer demand.

The Alliance for Automotive Innovation, which represents major automakers, has said California's EV standards may not work in other states because of insufficient consumer demand. Youngkin's office cited a report saying 9% of vehicles sold in Virginia in 2023 were electric.

Meanwhile, industry groups successfully pressed the Biden administration to give automakers more time to comply with stricter federal tailpipe-emissions rules aimed at broadening EV adoption. The Environmental Protection Agency [released new standards in March](#) that ratchet up more gradually than originally proposed, but still would effectively require electrics to account for more than half of new-vehicle sales by the early 2030s.

The Trump administration [stripped California](#) of its ability to set its own standards in 2019, but the Biden administration [restored that power](#) in 2022. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit in April denied a request from more than a dozen Republican-led states to overturn California's authority to establish its own car-pollution rules.

Mike Colias contributed to this article.

Write to Joseph De Avila at joseph.deavila@wsj.com

Copyright ©2024 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved. 87990cbe856818d5eddac44c7b1cdeb8