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## **EPA right to go after methane**

By Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-Texas)

The EPA recently proposed to reduce methane emissions from one of its largest sources -- the oil and gas industry. Methane is more than 20 times more potent than carbon dioxide in its greenhouse gas effects and as such, cutting methane emissions is critical to addressing climate change. This proposal is one piece of the broader effort we need to ensure our children and grandchildren have a healthy environment and vibrant future in the face of climate change.

As a Texan, I know both the importance and the impact of oil and natural gas development in this country. Our economy has relied on fossil fuels to power our manufacturing base, our transportation and agricultural sectors, and more. And, for the foreseeable future, the country will continue to develop these resources and technologies to achieve our energy, economic, national security, and, in some cases, our environmental objectives. However, we must acknowledge that the development of any fossil fuel resource can have significant negative environmental impacts. Those impacts affect the very oceans we fish, the air we breathe, and the water we drink. These too have real economic value that needs to be protected. While few people get rich from clean air and water, as a former nurse I know that everyone benefits from a healthier environment.

Some will say that EPA regulations are killing the economy and jobs, and that this proposal won't make any real difference in addressing climate change, and that industry and the state of Texas do not need the federal government to tell them how to protect public health and the environment. As much as some might wish for a world where big environmental issues are addressed voluntarily by industry or through the workings of the free market, or through individual state regulations, it just does not work that way.

These methane regulations will not only benefit our public health and environment, but they will be a boon for industry as well. Currently, the oil and gas industry emits enough methane pollution into the air to heat more than 6 million homes each winter. Once implemented, these regulations will curb and prevent this waste, allowing the oil and gas industry to capture and sell more of its own product.

Tackling methane pollution will also create high-quality jobs in a growing domestic manufacturing and service sector supporting common sense and cost effective methane control technologies. States like my home state of Texas, which has the highest concentration of facilities in the country, stand to benefit from future growth associated with this industry.

As the ranking member of the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology I have heard from countless experts about the risks associated with climate change. Record temperatures, an increase in heavy rain events, and rising seas are a few examples of what Americans are confronting now and can expect to see more frequently in the coming years. The scientific evidence shows we cannot afford to wait, but must act now if we are to stand a chance of lessening the impacts of climate change.

Leaders in the faith community have also been calling on us to address climate change. In his recent encyclical, Pope Francis noted that climate change “represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity” and that the poor will be disproportionately affected by its impacts. Pope Francis also stated that “there is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced.”

We need to listen to our scientists, to our religious leaders, and to the American people by supporting broad-based national policies that will cut greenhouse gas emissions, because acting on climate change is not only an environmental imperative, but both a near-term and long-term public health and economic imperative as well.

Johnson has represented Texas’s 30th Congressional District since 1993. She is ranking member on the Science, Space and Technology Committee, and sits on the Transportation Committee.