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Methane must be controlled

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Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges facing our world today. It is a complicated problem that we have a duty to address at every opportunity. As former Ohio EPA executives, we were very excited to see President Barack Obama take meaningful action on mitigating climate change by committing to reducing dangerous methane pollution from existing oil and gas wells.

When it comes to climate change, methane (Ch₄) is over 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide (CO₂) pollution. There are currently no federal standards requiring limits of industrial methane pollution on oil and gas operations nationwide.

The good news is that, although methane is potent, it is also one of the aspects of climate change that we have the most control over. A quarter of human-made climate change comes from methane pollution, so the action we take now can make a real difference.

This is why the action President Obama and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced earlier this month was so powerful. The U.S. and Canada, the world's second-largest and fourth-largest methane polluters, respectively, have committed to reducing methane pollution 40 to 45 percent. This is the meaningful action that this problem demands.

The new federal standards on methane will bring important benefits to Ohioans. There will be health benefits for the residents who live nearest to oil and gas development in eastern Ohio, since methane is a major contributor to smog. There will be a reduction in lost resources from capturing methane, as the gas would otherwise be wasted. There will even be more good-paying jobs right here in Ohio from a growing industry in methane mitigation technology.

We have reached the point where we cannot afford to wait to act. The discussion is no longer whether or not to address dangerous methane pollution from the oil and gas industry, but how quickly we can address it and how much of the damage can be undone.

It is our hope that the President acts swiftly to follow through on his promise to tackle existing source methane pollution. A draft rule from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in the immediate future will be essential to addressing this challenge. The President's leadership on

this issue will help ensure that our nation does its part in the global fight against climate change and that Ohioans, especially those living nearest to oil and gas development, are safe from dangerous air pollution.