

August 1, 2016

Dear Administrator McCarthy,

As religious leaders, we are deeply concerned with climate change and its impact on all of God's creation. We write to thank you for your commitment to addressing methane pollution, and to urge you to continue this necessary, moral work.

We applaud the EPA for beginning the formal process of requiring the oil and gas industry to provide assistance in the development of comprehensive methane emissions reductions. The Information Collection Request (ICR) rule is an important first step in regulating existing sources of pollution.

Climate change is one of the great moral issues of our time. Methane, one dominant contributor to climate disruption, must be subject to even stricter government concern and action. Restrictions on methane emissions are a highly effective way of addressing climate change: a ton of methane in the atmosphere warms the climate more than 80 times as much as a ton of CO₂ during the first twenty years after release. In order to prevent the most devastating impacts of climate change we must address methane pollution. Reducing methane pollution can change the rate of warming over the next 20 years and moderate the near term impacts of climate change, which disproportionately affect low income people and other vulnerable populations.

Oil and gas sources also emit other dangerous pollutants that harm Americans' health, such as smog-forming volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and cancer-causing toxics like benzene. To protect public health, stronger methane pollution standards must include regulations on VOCs. The ICR is a moral step towards addressing the dire health implications, such as cancer and asthma, of methane leaks.

Today, we witness the heavy burden placed on those who are least responsible for climate change. As people of faith, we are called to care for children, the elderly, and low-income communities. We believe that issuing national standards on existing methane sources in the oil and gas industry will help care for these vulnerable communities.

We applaud your leadership and urge you to continue to protect human health and the very creation that God created by working towards comprehensive regulations of existing methane pollution.

Sincerely,

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