

# **The Methane Waste Prevention Act of 2019**

## **Fact Sheet**

The Methane Waste Prevention Act of 2019 (H.R. 2711), introduced by U.S. Rep. Diana DeGette (D-CO), will reinstate and update the methane waste and pollution prevention standards established by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2016.

### **The problem:**

Over the last decade, as U.S. oil and gas production has dramatically increased, so too have emissions of methane and other air pollutants associated with fossil fuel development. Methane, the primary ingredient of natural gas, is a powerful global warming pollutant when released into the atmosphere, but a valuable resource when captured – a resource that belongs to the American public when extracted from public lands. The equipment leaks and natural gas venting that release methane from oil and gas operations also release volatile organic compounds (VOCs), important precursors to ground-level ozone, and other hazardous air pollutants, including the carcinogen benzene. Methane and the other air pollutants can lead to respiratory damage, cancer, birth defects, and nervous system damage. Methane flaring also contributes to climate change, wastes a valuable resource, and can damage the health of local communities.

### **Why should Americans care?**

Climate change is an existential threat to the U.S. economy and the livelihoods of all Americans, and methane is a potent global warming pollutant with approximately 80 times the warming power of carbon dioxide over a 25-year period. In 2017, the oil and gas industry was the largest source of methane pollution in the United States. According to the Government Accountability Office, between 2009 and 2015, oil and gas producers on public and Indian lands, flared, vented and leaked over 460 billion cubic feet of natural gas, enough to supply over 6 million households for a year and bring in as much as \$23 million per year in additional royalty revenue.

### **What's the Trump administration doing?**

President Trump is increasing the risks to public health and the climate by gutting existing regulations that require oil and gas companies to reduce methane emissions. His administration has taken actions that will increase methane emissions by nearly 1.6 million tons by 2025, result in the additional release of over 1.8 million tons of VOCs, and 16,500 tons of hazardous air pollutants, and waste over \$1 billion worth of natural gas. The Trump administration is weakening regulations to benefit the oil and gas industry at the expense of the climate, public health, and U.S. taxpayers.

## **How will the Methane Waste Prevention Act of 2019 address this problem?**

The Methane Waste Prevention Act of 2019 will:

- Codify the EPA's 2016 methane rule;
- Authorize the EPA Administrator to revise the reinstated 2016 rule, as long as the revision results in a reduction in gas release; and
- Require the Secretary of the Interior to issue new rules to reduce the waste of natural gas from Federal leases and to increase reporting requirements for new and existing well. In particular, the bill will require:

*Gas Waste Reduction:* To reduce the waste of natural gas via venting, flaring, and leaks on public lands, the bill will require:

- The capture of 85 percent of all gas produced on public lands within 3 years of enactment, and 99 percent of gas within 5 years;
- An end to the venting of natural gas;
- No flaring from new wells, effective 2 years after enactment; and
- Establishment of equipment and operation standards to minimize gas leakage and the establishment of mandatory leak detection and repair procedures.

*Gas Measuring, Reporting, and Transparency:* To better track the volumes of gas lost by venting, flaring, and leaks, the bill will:

- Establish more stringent requirements for reporting production and disposition volumes;
- Make the data publicly available via the internet;
- Require the Secretary to report to Congress detailing the actual amounts of wasted gas from federal lands;
- Require the Secretary to recommend additional rules necessary to further limit venting, flaring, and leaks; and
- Authorize additional penalties for entities violating the standards, including production restrictions or market-proportional fines.

### **For more information**

For more information, please contact Nikki Roy, Climate Change and Environment Policy Director with Rep. Diana DeGette ([nikki.roy@mail.house.gov](mailto:nikki.roy@mail.house.gov)).