

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

One in three Americans live in a county with oil and gas development, and as the leaders of America's cities and counties, we write today to support the Environmental Protection Agency's effort to reduce methane emissions from new and modified sources in the oil and gas sector. We also urge the agency to swiftly move forward with a rule to rein in emissions from existing sources of oil and gas methane pollution. Doing so will protect our constituents from unhealthy air pollution associated with the methane and toxic chemicals emitted from oil and gas infrastructure and equipment, and protect us from the consequences of climate change that our cities and counties face on a daily basis.

Right now, methane is leaking from over a million oil and gas wells, infrastructure and associated equipment located across the country. This problem has been highlighted most recently by the tragic disaster at Aliso Canyon in California where a gas well leaked more than 96 thousand metric tons of methane and caused the evacuation of nearby neighborhoods. Most leaks aren't as big as Aliso Canyon, but they add up to a much larger problem in aggregate -- over 7 million metric tons of methane emissions a year -- enough gas to heat 5 million American homes. The EPA has the legal ability to require systematic leak detection and repair and other proven best practices at existing oil and gas wells and infrastructure around the country. We need national standards to ensure this happens, and that it apply to all sources -- those already in existence and the ones that will be built in the future.

Methane is a particularly potent climate pollutant, with more than 80 times the warming potential of carbon dioxide over a 20-year period, and the oil and gas sector is the largest industrial emitter of methane emissions. By combining the EPA's rule for new sources and other already proposed measures, forthcoming efforts from the Bureau of Land Management to reduce emissions and waste from oil and gas development on federal lands, and a further EPA rule for existing sources, your administration could reduce methane emissions from oil and gas by more than 40%. And because methane is the primary constituent of natural gas, reducing these emissions is extremely cost-effective.

The negative health impacts of climate change are well established: rising temperatures expose our constituents to greater risks of respiratory illness, heat-and-weather related stress and disease carried by insects. When it comes to pollution from oil and gas development, however, there are additional grave risks from the volatile organic compounds emitted along with methane that make smog worse, and include toxic chemicals like benzene - a known carcinogen. Strong standards are needed to keep our air clean and our constituents healthy.

As Colorado's state rule for methane has shown, all stakeholders can come to the table to produce standards that reduce methane emissions from both new and existing sources in a manner that both promotes positive business outcomes and cleans up our air without driving industry out of the state. By reducing emissions of short-lived climate forcers like methane, we can take significant steps towards meeting our global greenhouse gas reduction targets, clean up the air near oil and gas facilities, save industry money and continue to spur American innovation.

Across the country oil and gas wells and infrastructure are continuously moving closer to our constituents. If the oil and gas industry is going to continue to expand, it is imperative that they reduce air pollution. People living, working and going to school near oil and gas facilities in states without air pollution limits deserve to breathe the same cleaner air that Colorado's new and existing source methane rule is ensuring.

Sincerely,

cc: Gina McCarthy, Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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