

April 23, 2018

Dear Secretary Zinke:

The Bureau of Land Management Methane Waste Prevention rule is a safeguard for many states' economies, for our communities' health, and for the safety of our climate. As leaders in the Black church, united in our shared commitment to responsible environmental stewardship and the protection of human health, we write to ask that you hold hearings and extend the comment period on this critical rule.

Protecting this energy source from waste is of vital importance to our communities since methane leaks have a devastating impact on communities of color and God's creation.

Each year, the oil and gas industry dumps about nine million tons of methane and toxic pollutants into our nation's air. Over one million African Americans live in counties that face a cancer risk above the EPA's level of concern from toxics emitted by natural gas facilities.

In addition, natural gas waste shortchanges taxpayers by millions of dollars because royalties aren't collected from methane leaked, vented or flared into the air. These are revenues that could be used to assist communities to invest in schools, libraries, or infrastructure. The methane currently being leaked could heat more than 1 million homes if only captured and used.

The proposed rescission or revision of the Bureau of Land Management's 2016 Methane Waste Prevention Rule puts our community health in jeopardy and wastes taxpayers' money. This Bureau of Land Management Methane Waste Prevention Rule is about responsible energy stewardship, as well as protecting the air we breathe: It is designed to stop leaking, venting and flaring of methane from oil and gas wells on public lands.

The comment period for the repeal of the Methane Waste Prevention Rule is too short. Communities that bear the worst impacts of methane pollution need more time to weigh in.

We respectfully request that you extend the comment period and provide impacted communities an opportunity to weigh in during hearings and other public forums.

Sincerely,

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