

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 15, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President-Elect
Office of the President Elect
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear President-Elect Biden:

We write respectfully to request that your administration swiftly act to restore and strengthen regulations of methane emissions from oil and natural gas production. The Trump administration's recent rollbacks of previously existing standards have been a disaster for the climate, public health, and environmental justice, and are economically unnecessary, rejected by the very industry they purport to serve. We also urge your administration to mount a vigorous defense of the Bureau of Land Management's 2016 regulations to reduce emissions that waste natural gas associated with production on federal and tribal lands.

Methane is an extremely potent greenhouse gas—causing 84 times the global warming of an equal quantity of carbon dioxide over two decades after emission—and the oil and gas industry is the largest emitter of methane in the United States. Despite recent data showing large increases in methane emissions from oil and gas production in recent years, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under the Trump administration last year completed a rollback of critical methane emissions regulations created during the Obama administration. The EPA's amendments to the Obama-era New Source Performance Standards weaken and in some cases eliminate altogether requirements that oil and natural gas companies limit methane and volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions from their operations. To counter the harmful effects of these rollbacks and address the climate crisis, strengthened new source standards, and the extension of regulations to include existing sources, must be implemented as soon as possible.

The Trump methane regulatory regime amounts to a new subsidy for the oil and gas industry at the expense of the climate and public health. About 25% of human-caused global warming to date can be attributed to methane emissions, and co-located methane and VOC emissions exacerbate the already large air quality and human health impacts of fossil fuel development on frontline communities. Reducing methane emissions through increased leak detection and repair will also create high-paying jobs that can never be offshored. With the climate crisis accelerating, it is the wrong time to let oil and gas producers off the hook for methane emissions. The industry itself acknowledges as much, with many of its leaders voicing opposition to the Trump-era rules.

Taking swift action to reinstate and strengthen responsible methane regulations on the oil and gas industry, along with measures to reduce waste on our nation's public lands, would be a powerful early step in your administration's work to meet the threat of climate change. We look forward to addressing the climate crisis alongside the Biden-Harris administration and urge you to make strengthened methane rules for oil and gas production an early priority.

Sincerely,

/s/ Martin Heinrich
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

/s/ Chris Van Hollen
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/ Cory A. Booker
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

/s/ Kirsten Gillibrand
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

/s/ Benjamin L. Cardin
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

/s/ Angus S. King, Jr.
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

/s/ Dianne Feinstein
Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

/s/ Jeanne Shaheen
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

/s/ Richard Blumenthal
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

/s/ Catherine Cortez Masto
Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator

/s/ Christopher Murphy
Christopher Murphy
United States Senator

/s/ Tina Smith
Tina Smith
United States Senator

/s/ Tammy Baldwin
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

/s/ Michael F. Bennet
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

/s/ Amy Klobuchar
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

/s/ Jack Reed
Jack Reed
United States Senator

/s/ Jeffrey A. Merkley
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

/s/ Ron Wyden
Ron Wyden
United States Senator

/s/ Richard J. Durbin
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

/s/ Bernard Sanders
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

/s/ Robert Menendez
Robert Menendez
United States Senator

/s/ Edward J. Markey
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

/s/ Margaret Wood Hassan
Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator

/s/ Ben Ray Luján
Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator