

July 11, 2016

Dear Member of Congress,

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters nationwide, we urge you to oppose all anti-environmental policy riders in H.R. 5538, the Fiscal Year 2017 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. The bill already has many such riders, including provisions seeking to prevent the Environmental Protection Agency and the Bureau of Land Management from finalizing and implementing rulemakings to reduce methane emissions and waste from the oil and gas sector. We urge you to support amendments to strike these sections as well as the other anti-environmental riders in the bill.

Methane is a highly potent greenhouse gas -- 87 times more powerful than carbon dioxide during the time it remains in the atmosphere. The oil and gas sector is the largest source of methane in the U.S., leaking or intentionally venting large quantities of this dangerous pollutant into our air every day. In 2014, the oil and gas industry emitted over 9.8 million metric tons of methane, a number 34% higher than previous estimates. The near-term climate impact of these emissions is equal to the pollution caused by more than 200 coal-fired power plants over 20 years and studies suggest that the scope of the problem is likely even larger.

Along with methane, oil and gas facilities and equipment also release other air pollutants that can harm our health, including formaldehyde, benzene, acetaldehyde, and ethyl benzene. These toxics can cause cancer, respiratory symptoms, anemia, brain damage and birth defects, eye irritation, and blood and neurological disorders.

Thankfully, on May 12, 2016, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) took the commonsense step of finalizing the first-ever federal standards to reduce harmful methane and other air pollution from new and modified sources in the oil and gas industry. These standards require proven, low-cost safeguards and, according to EPA estimates, will yield net climate benefits of \$170 million in 2025. They will generate significant public health benefits as well by curbing smog- and soot-forming Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) emissions and hazardous air pollutants.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) also released standards to reduce methane waste on public lands with a new proposed rule on January 22, 2016. The rule's objective is to reduce the amount of natural gas wasted as a result of venting, flaring and leaks on federal oil and gas leases. This proposal is not only critical for cleaner air and pollution reduction, but also, to ensure a fair return to American taxpayers through increased royalties for states and the federal government, and to make certain that domestic energy is put to good use.

EPA's methane rule and BLM's waste rule are smart policies that will reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, hazardous air toxics, and smog-forming VOCs, while reducing the amount of gas wasted by the oil and gas industry. Policy provisions targeting these or any other environmental and public health protections have no place in spending legislation. For these reasons, we urge you to oppose these riders and support amendments to strike these and all other anti-environmental riders.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Appalachian Mountain Club
Breathe Utah
Catskill Citizens for Safe Energy
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
Clean Air Task Force
Clean Water Action
Conservation Voters New Mexico
Earth Day Network
Earthjustice
Earthworks
Elders Climate Action
Environment America
Environmental Defense Action Fund
Environmental Justice Center at Chestnut Hill United Church
Green America
Group Against Smog and Pollution
Interfaith Power & Light
League of Conservation Voters
Mom's Clean Air Force - New Mexico Chapter
Montana Environmental Information Center
National Parks Conservation Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
Nature Abounds
Partnership for Responsible Business
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Powder River Basin Resource Council
Public Citizen
Rachel Carson Council
Responsible Drilling Alliance

San Juan Citizens Alliance
Sierra Club
Tribal Environmental Policy Center
Western Environmental Law Center
Western Organization of Resource Councils
The Wilderness Society
Western Colorado Congress
Wilderness Workshop
Wyoming Outdoor Council