



LOCAL AND TRIBAL ELECTED OFFICIALS CALL FOR OIL AND GAS REFORM MEASURES IN FEDERAL RECONCILIATION PACKAGE

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On Friday, 53 local and tribal elected officials from across the Interior West sent a letter urging Congress to enact reforms to the federal oil and gas program in the budget reconciliation package that is currently under debate.

In [a letter addressed to US Senator Joe Manchin and US Representative Raúl Grijalva](#), who chair the Energy and Natural Resources Committee of their respective chambers, local and tribal leaders from eight western states said the current program is outdated and must be reformed to protect public health and the environment, increase taxpayer returns on publicly owned resources, and improve tribal consultation in the leasing process.

“As part of the budget reconciliation process, we specifically and respectfully ask that Congress take action to: strengthen outdated federal oil and gas bonding standards; increase the federal onshore program’s minimum lease bids, rents and royalty rates; end the wasteful non-competitive leasing program; end the leasing of federal lands with low or no potential for oil and gas development; and strengthen leasing standards to more substantively engage and consult with Tribes before and during the leasing process in order to protect sacred sites and cultural resources,” the letter states.

The proposed reconciliation package, which has been under debate for weeks in Congress, includes provisions that address the climate crisis and pollution from the oil and gas industry. The letter specifically requests that Congress address the problem of orphan oil and gas wells by updating bonding rates, which have not increased in decades; protect taxpayers by increasing the federal onshore royalty rate; stop leasing practices that prevent public lands from being used for other purposes besides development; and allow tribes to be more active partners in the leasing process and in the management of ancestral lands.

The elected officials who signed the letter are a part of Western Leaders Network, a nonpartisan nonprofit organization of more than 450 local and tribal elected officials across the Interior West who work to advance climate solutions and conservation initiatives.