



Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham
490 Old Santa Fe Trail Room 400
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Re: Methane Rulemakings

Date: June 30, 2020

Dear Gov. Lujan Grisham,

As elected officials representing residents from across the state of New Mexico, we write in appreciation of the leadership you and your administration are showing in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Your efforts are saving countless lives and you have the support of us and our communities.

We also write in strong support of the work being done by the Office of the Governor, New Mexico Environment Department Air Quality Bureau, and New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department Oil Conservation Division toward efforts to develop real, meaningful regulations that protect all New Mexicans, the air we breathe and the environment in which we live and recreate from methane waste and pollution from the oil and gas industry. The COVID-19 pandemic and its related economic repercussions are highlighting the importance of this work, and we ask that the state forge ahead with the rulemaking process this year to develop and enact nationally leading statewide regulations that will lead to significant reductions in methane pollution and waste.

One of the primary purposes of these rulemakings is to reduce the waste of methane, which is not only a powerful greenhouse gas that accounts for 25 percent of current global warming, but also a publicly owned resource in the form of natural gas. As such, wasted methane is lost taxpayer revenue. Estimates are that methane waste costs New Mexico taxpayers more than \$40 million a year in foregone tax and royalty revenue, which is funding that our communities critically need right now, especially for our education systems. Wasting natural resources – in good times or bad – is not a New Mexican value. The next generation of New Mexicans cannot afford to lose any education revenue with needless waste, especially when oil and gas companies have the technology to capture more emissions.

The COVID-19 pandemic also underlines the importance of efforts to reduce pollution that increases public health impacts. According to the [Center for Disease Control](#), people with underlying health conditions such as asthma, emphysema and heart disease are most at risk for serious complications and adverse outcomes from COVID-19. Given that oil and gas operations are a major source of ozone-forming pollutants that can lead to and exacerbate these conditions, it is more important than ever for New Mexico to move forward with strong methane and ozone

regulations. This is especially true in light of the American Lung Association's recent State of the Air report, which gave New Mexico's major oil and gas producing counties poor grades for ozone pollution, including Fs in Eddy and San Juan.

What's more, the COVID-19 crisis is highlighting the systemic inequities in our public health system and the need for New Mexico to step up clean air protections for its most vulnerable. More than 80 percent of the coronavirus cases in New Mexico are people of color, including almost 60 percent Native Americans and more than 20 percent among Hispanic New Mexicans. The methane and ozone rules under development will help protect all New Mexicans and the air we breathe. It's more important now than ever that we take definitive action and in a timely manner to preserve our health and the integrity of our air quality amid a respiratory pandemic.

We as elected officials from across the state feel the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, and we recognize that the work being done by the state is vital to protecting our public health and climate. Moreover, we believe that the state's methane rulemakings are a key tool to our economic recovery post-pandemic. By developing nationally leading methane rules, New Mexico can help build a stronger, more diverse economy and create jobs of the future in the methane mitigation industry.

This is the time to be proactive. This is especially true as the latest scientific data from New Mexico's Permian Basin shows a huge methane pollution problem – the worst of any U.S. oil and gas producing area according to a recent peer-reviewed scientific study – and as the Trump Administration works to undo decades of environmental regulations across the board, including rolling back the Environmental Protection Agency's methane regulations and weakening enforcement of critical public health and environmental safeguards.

Under your leadership, New Mexico is equipped and positioned to set a national example and chart its own course for protecting our climate, our health and our economy. We as a state must move forward with methane rulemaking efforts for the benefit of all New Mexicans.

Sincerely,

CC: Secretary Jim Kenney, NMED
Director Sandra Ely, NMED
Secretary Sarah Cottrell Propst, EMNRD
Director Adrienne Sandoval, EMNRD

City Councilor Isaac Benton, City of Albuquerque, New Mexico
City Councilor Pat Davis, City of Albuquerque, New Mexico
City Councilor Diane Gibson, City of Albuquerque, New Mexico
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Mayor Pro Tem Rosalyn Fry, City of Aztec, New Mexico
Mayor Victor Snover, City of Aztec, New Mexico
County Commissioner Elect Adriann Barboa, Bernalillo County, New Mexico
County Commissioner Jim Collie, Bernalillo County, New Mexico

County Commissioner Debbie O'Malley, Bernalillo County, New Mexico
County Commissioner Shannon Reynolds, Dona Ana County, New Mexico
County Commissioner Harry Browne, Grant County, New Mexico
County Commissioner Alicia Edwards, Grant County, New Mexico
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City Councilor Gill Sorg, City of Las Cruces, New Mexico
City Councilor Gabe Vasquez, City of Las Cruces, New Mexico
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Health, Education & Human Services Chairman Daniel Tso, Navajo Nation, New Mexico
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City Councilor Signe Lindell, City of Santa Fe, New Mexico
City Councilor Carol Romero-Wirth, City of Santa Fe, New Mexico
City Councilor Renee Villarreal, City of Santa Fe, New Mexico
Mayor Alan Webber, City of Santa Fe, New Mexico
Town Councilor Nathaniel Evans, Town of Taos, New Mexico
Governor E. Michael Silvas, Pueblo of Ysleta del Sur, New Mexico
New Mexico Public Regulation Commissioner Stephen Fischmann, District 5
New Mexico Public Regulation Commissioner Cynthia Hall, District 1
Santa Fe Community College Board of Trustee Linda Siegle
Bill O'Neill, New Mexico State Senate, District 13
Gerald Ortiz y Pino, New Mexico State Senate, District 12
Nancy Rodriguez, New Mexico State Senate, District 24
Antoinette Sedillo Lopez, New Mexico State Senate, District 16
Benny Shendo, New Mexico State Senate, District 22
William Soules, New Mexico State Senate, District 37
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Mimi Stewart, New Mexico State Senate Majority Whip, District 17
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