



June 23, 2021

Dear United States Representative,

On behalf of Western Leaders Network, a nonpartisan nonprofit organization of 450 local and tribal elected officials across the Interior West, I write to urge your support of [House Joint Resolution 34](#) pursuant to the Congressional Review Act, which will clear the path for the Environmental Protection Agency to pursue common-sense measures to reduce methane pollution.

Methane is a powerful greenhouse gas that is 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide and responsible for about [25 percent of the climate change impacts](#) we are experiencing today. For western communities like ours, those impacts come in the form of extreme heat and drought, the destruction of wildlife habitat, poor air quality and depleted water resources. This consequently affects our farming, ranching and tribal communities, outdoor recreation economies and our quality of life.

One of the primary producers of methane pollution in the U.S. is the oil and gas industry, which in 2019 leaked and vented more than 16.3 million metric tons of the pollutant, wasting \$2.4 billion in natural gas that could have heated approximately 12.5 million homes for a year. In the San Juan Basin, where Western Leaders Network's headquarters is based, scientists discovered a methane cloud the size of Delaware hovering over the Four Corners states, which has contributed to the region's poor air quality grades over the past few years from the American Lung Association. Federal regulation of oil and gas emissions is therefore critical not only to the health of our constituents in this region, but throughout oil and gas producing regions in the Interior West.

Prior to 2020, the industry was required under Obama-era regulations to update its equipment and conduct periodic inspections for leaks and malfunctions to reduce unnecessary pollution. But the Trump Administration, in its final days, directed the EPA to remove federal air pollution limits from oil and gas transmission and storage facilities. The move, by the agency's own estimates, would increase methane emissions by 850,000 tons by 2030.

The reduction of industry pollution has bipartisan support. One poll found that [91 percent of Westerners](#) are in favor of requirements for oil and gas companies to prevent methane leaks. Moreover, major companies including Shell, Equinor and BP have publicly stated their support to restore the EPA regulations. If we hope to pave a path toward long-term climate solutions and a cleaner energy future, federal leadership must stop placing the burden solely on states to regulate oil and gas industry pollution. Federal oversight of methane emissions is essential and the only way we can achieve national climate goals.

In 2017, Western Leaders Network called upon [the U.S. Senate to oppose](#) the use of the Congressional Review Act to rescind Bureau of Land Management rules limiting pollution from the oil and gas sector. Our argument then was the same as it is today; federal regulations on methane is simply a common-sense and cost-effective way to prevent devastating climate impacts, protect our public health and environment, create good-paying jobs for our constituents, and bring much-needed royalty revenue to our western communities to help pay for public services, schools and infrastructure. We urge you to support this resolution to eliminate the previous administration's loopholes, restore EPA pollution protections, and allow the agency to pursue stronger standards to regulate methane emissions.

Sincerely,

Gwen Lachelt
Executive Director

Western Leaders Network

1309 East 3rd Avenue • Suite 22 • Post Office Box 4433 • Durango, Colorado 81302
970-317-4264 • westernleaders.org