

**Western Leaders Network**  
P.O. Box 4433, Durango, CO 81302

February 28, 2017

Dear Senator:

We are writing to express our opposition to a proposal to use the Congressional Review Act (CRA) to block rules issued by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to limit natural gas waste from the oil and gas sector. As elected officials from local governments across the Interior West, we strongly support this recently adopted rule on venting and flaring methane because it will cut natural gas waste on federal and tribal lands, will help ensure a fair return to local governments and the taxpaying public, will put our energy resources to good use, and will clean up our air.

The CRA is a blunt tool that, if successful, would prevent any “substantially similar” rule from being issued, allowing the oil and natural gas industry to continue to waste hundreds of millions of dollars-worth of taxpayer owned resources every year, and use outdated, wasteful technologies.

The BLM’s rule to reduce methane waste from venting and flaring protects the interests of our western communities and constituents in a number of important ways:

- **The rule cuts the waste of American energy resources.** On federal and tribal lands, the rule would save more than \$330 million worth of natural gas annually that could be used to heat homes, power vehicles, or generate electricity. In fact, enough natural gas is being wasted on these lands to supply 760,000 households each year.
- **The rule ensures a fair return to taxpayers.** States, tribes and federal taxpayers lose royalty revenues when natural gas is wasted – as much as \$23 million annually in royalty revenue for the Federal Government and the States that share it, according to a 2010 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report. Federal royalties are split about evenly between the federal government and the states, and then used to help fund education, infrastructure projects, such as road and bridges, and mitigation projects to address the impacts of energy development to western communities.
- **The rule helps clean up our air.** The same leaks that lead to natural gas waste also release toxic and smog-forming pollutants such as volatile organic compounds, benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, and xylene. The same technologies that reduce natural gas waste also limit these other harmful pollutants and prevent asthma attacks and other smog-induced respiratory problems.
- **The rule helps create American jobs.** Efforts to cut methane waste has put American entrepreneurs to work creating innovative, cutting-edge technologies to make it economically feasible for the oil and gas companies achieve reductions. A national rule to cut methane waste on public and tribal lands helps to deepen investment and create more jobs in this industry.

Leading oil and natural gas companies and several states, including Colorado, Wyoming, Ohio and Pennsylvania, have successfully adopted programs to reduce methane — the primary component of natural gas—and other air pollution from the oil and gas industry. After Colorado adopted the nation’s first-ever rule to cut methane waste and pollution with support from both environmental advocates and oil and gas operators two years ago, the state’s oil and gas industry has continued to grow. Colorado’s natural gas production increased about 10 percent, oil production is up 58 percent, and the number of oil and gas wells also increased by more than three percent.

This common sense rule has strong bipartisan support among the public. A bipartisan poll by Colorado College found that 80 percent of Westerners support action to cut natural gas waste on public lands, and a broad and diverse array of western stakeholders supported the BLM natural gas waste rule.

We urge your opposition to using the Congressional Review Act to eliminate BLM’s rule to reduce natural gas waste because of the rule’s benefit to our local governments, constituents, and taxpayers.

Sincerely yours,

**Colorado County Commissioners**

Gwen Lachelt  
La Plata County Commissioner

Karn Stiegelmeier  
Summit County Commissioner

Julie Westendorff  
La Plata County Commissioner

Mike Brazell  
Park County Commissioner

Jason Anderson  
Saguache County Commissioner

Nancy Jackson  
Arapahoe County Commissioner

Jill Ryan  
Eagle County Commissioner

Eva Henry  
Adams County Commissioner

Kathy Chandler-Henry  
Eagle County Commissioner

Steve Child  
Pitkin County Commissioner

Michael Whiting  
Archuleta County Commissioner

Hilary Cooper  
San Miguel County Commissioner

Keith Baker  
Chaffee County Commissioner

Joan May  
San Miguel County Commissioner

Ben Tisdell  
Ouray County Commissioner

Kris Holstrom  
San Miguel County Commissioner

Cindy Domenico  
Boulder County Commissioner

Deb Gardner  
Boulder County Commissioner

Elise Jones  
Boulder County Commissioner

### **Colorado Local Officials**

Christina Rinderle  
Mayor, City of Durango

Anita "Sweetie" Marbury  
Councilor, City of Durango

Richard White  
Mayor Pro-Tem, City of Durango

Christine Berg  
Mayor, City of Lafayette

Gustavo Reyna  
Mayor Pro-Tem, City of Lafayette

Merrily Mazza  
Council Member, City of Lafayette

Shakti  
Council Member, City of Lakewood

Polly Christensen  
Council Member, City of Longmont

Connie Sullivan  
Mayor, Town of Lyons

Kristopher Larsen  
Mayor, Town of Nederland

Robin L. Kniech  
Council Member, City of Denver

Suzanne Jones  
Mayor, City of Boulder

Sam Weaver  
Council Member, City of Boulder

Aaron Brockett  
Council Member, City of Boulder

Liza Morzel  
Council Member, City of Boulder

Mary Dolores Young  
Council Member, City of Boulder

John Clark  
Mayor, Town of Ridgway

Erick Johnson  
Mayor Pro Tem, Town of Ridgway

Ellen Hunter  
Councilor, Town of Ridgway

Robb Austin  
Councilor, Town of Ridgway

Britt Bassett  
Board Member, La Plata Electric Association

Jeff Berman  
Board Member, La Plata Electric Association

Jack Turner  
Board Member, La Plata Electric Association

### **Ute Mountain Ute Tribe**

Regina Lopez Whiteskunk  
Former Tribal Council Member

## **New Mexico Elected Officials**

Debbie O'Malley  
Bernalillo County Commissioner

Maggie Hart Stebbins  
Bernalillo County Commissioner

Paula Garcia  
Mora County Commissioner

George Trujillo  
Mora County Commissioner

Anna Hansen  
Santa Fe County Commissioner

Javier Gonzales  
Mayor, City of Santa Fe

Joseph Maestas  
Santa Fe City Council Member

Pat Davis  
Albuquerque City Council Member

Katee McClure  
Aztec City Commissioner

Senator Linda Lopez  
Albuquerque

Senator Bill O'Neill  
Albuquerque

Senator Gerald Ortiz y Pino  
Albuquerque

Senator Jeff Steinborn  
Las Cruces

Representative Cheryl Williams Stapleton  
Albuquerque

## **Nevada Elected Officials**

David Bobzien  
Council Member At-large, City of Reno

Jenny Brekhus  
Council Member, Ward 1, City of Reno

Chris Giunchigliani  
Clark County Commissioner

## **Utah Elected Officials**

Rani Derasary  
Moab City Council Member

Kalen Jones  
Moab City Council Member