

November 25, 2019

The Honorable Andrew Wheeler
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Wheeler:

As religious organizations dedicated to protecting God's creation and human health we strongly oppose amendments to the federal requirements that oil and gas companies control leaks of methane from new wells, storage facilities and pipelines. The New Source Performance Standards for the Oil and Natural Gas Industry should be left intact. Weakening or eliminating standards for methane, a potent greenhouse gas, will hurt vulnerable communities living near these oil and gas operations and ignores the EPA's responsibility to protect human health.

By EPA's own admission, if adopted, this reversal would result in the release of an additional 370,000 short tons of methane annually. To date, the industry's own voluntary pollution reduction programs represent just a small fraction of gas producers and on their own are not enough to reduce methane leaks and pollution from the oil and gas industry.

Our religious communities seek a healthy and abundant future for the families and children we serve. Leaking oil and gas operations contribute to asthma, cancer, and other health problems in nearby communities. Illnesses contribute to missed work and school days.

Religious organizations have long advocated on the urgent need to address climate change and air pollution. We are not only committed to protecting vulnerable populations but also caring for God's created world. Methane is a highly potent heat-trapping pollutant that warms the climate 86 times more than carbon dioxide during the first twenty years after its release. The most significant source of methane emissions are oil and gas operations, which also emit other dangerous pollutants that harm our communities' health, including smog-forming volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and cancer-causing pollutants like benzene.

This proposed amendment to the New Source Performance Standards rule will pollute God's creation and harm human health, especially vulnerable and frontline communities bearing the devastating impacts of climate change.

We have a moral obligation to protect God's gift of air for current and future generations. Dismantling the New Source Performance Standards, which reduces waste, protects human health, and aids in environmental stewardship, fails to uphold the common good. We urge you to withdraw the August 2019 proposed policy amendments to the New Source Performance Standards for the Oil and Natural Gas Industry.

Sincerely,
Christian Reformed Church Office of Social Justice

Creation Justice Ministries
Franciscan Action Network
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Interfaith Power & Light
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), Office is Public Witness
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas' Justice Team
United Methodist Women
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice