

July 19, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, and Senators,

Reducing oil and gas methane emissions is one of the most efficient and effective ways to address climate change, reduce needless waste, and protect the health of the millions of Americans living in or around active oil and gas sites. Congress has repeatedly made clear that cutting methane emissions was a priority, most recently when it passed the Methane Emissions Reduction Program (MERP) in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) last year.

The groups listed below **strongly oppose attempts to delay implementation of the MERP in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), or in future legislation. Delaying implementation of this critical program would harm the climate, impair public health, increase waste, and imperil economic benefits already being realized as a result of the program.**

The MERP includes several important provisions that will help put the U.S. on a path to quickly cut methane emissions, which have already warmed the planet 0.5°C (total warming to date is about 1°C).<sup>1</sup> These provisions include a waste emissions charge, which only applies to operators with large facilities that release over 25,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent greenhouse gas emissions each year. These large oil and gas facilities are only responsible for paying the charge for the portion of emissions exceeding industry-developed, performance-based targets, and many operators will not be required to pay any fees because they have already made investments to reduce their emissions. Similarly, an independent operator with hundreds of low-producing wells within a particular basin would likely not pay the charge.<sup>2</sup> And of course, many operators are already taking steps now to avoid assessed fees by making cost-effective investments to reduce emissions and decrease waste, and those that have not still have ample time to do so. Many operators are already making those investments; delaying implementation lets bad actors off the hook, and studies show that every million metric tons of methane released in the atmosphere contributes to an additional 1,430 premature deaths annually.

MERP is a forward-looking program, set to put the U.S. on a path of successfully and efficiently reducing oil and gas methane emissions and spurring economic innovation in methane mitigation. The standards and limits set in MERP are in line with the industry-set goals, and

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<sup>1</sup> IPCC, WGI, Summary for Policymakers 7 (2021), [https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC\\_AR6\\_WGI\\_SPM.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_SPM.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> See for example: <https://www.ogci.com/action-and-engagement/reducing-methane-emissions/#methane-target> and <https://onefuture.us/2022-methane-emissions-intensity-report/>

many operators understand the need to lower their emissions and have already started doing so. With this in mind, **we strongly oppose any attempts to delay implementation of the MERP.**

We thank you for your consideration and stand ready to support your efforts to continue implementing MERP and reducing methane emissions in all sectors.

Sincerely,

Sierra Club  
League of Conservation Voters  
Liveable Arlington  
Earthjustice  
Interfaith Power & Light  
Health Action New Mexico  
Earthworks  
Environmental Defense Fund  
Citizens' Climate Lobby  
Hispanic Access Foundation  
Southern Environmental Law Center  
Green America  
Bold Alliance  
Moms Clean Air Force  
Defend Our Future  
Greenpeace USA  
Clean Air Task Force  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Rio Grande International Study Center  
Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania  
The Wilderness Society  
Climate Action Campaign  
Oceana  
Conservation Voters New Mexico  
Zero Hour  
GreenLatinos  
National Hispanic Medical Association  
US Partnership for Education for Sustainable Development  
New Mexico & El Paso Interfaith Power and Light