

The Honorable Gina McCarthy  
EPA Administrator  
Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20460

October 27, 2014

Dear Administrator McCarthy:

As religious leaders concerned with climate change and the human community, we are writing to urge you to issue national standards aimed at cutting emissions of methane pollution from oil and gas operations. These emissions directly contribute to climate change and have detrimental impacts to human health and wellbeing. As we look to move away from fossil fuels in the long term and into a clean energy future, we know that regulation of methane in the near term is an important step to ensuring healthy communities and a healthy planet.

Under the Clean Air Act, the Environmental Protection Agency has clear authority to develop methane standards for the oil and gas industry. We believe that such standards can help protect human and nonhuman communities and can control the waste of natural gas and methane emissions.

Climate change is one of the greatest moral issues of our time and methane is one of the most potent greenhouse gas emissions that contributes to climate disruption. As people of faith, we are called to care for God's creation and our communities, particularly the most vulnerable such as children, low-income families, women and the elderly. We believe that issuing national standards on methane will help care for these vulnerable communities by protecting them from methane pollution and curbing climate change.

The oil and natural gas sector is the largest industrial source of methane, which in the course of two decades is a potent climate pollutant 80 times more powerful as carbon dioxide. Because methane is very potent in the near-term, the impact on reduced warming over a 20-year timeframe after emissions reductions would be equivalent to cutting 340 million tons per year of carbon dioxide.

In addition, oil and gas sources also emit other dangerous pollutants that harm Americans' health, including smog-forming volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and cancer-causing pollutants like benzene. Strong methane pollution standards, which include VOCs, will deliver significant public health benefits, by cutting toxic air pollution.

We applaud your leadership and urge you to continue to protect human health and the very Creation that God created by issuing strong national methane pollution standards.

We look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Susan Henry-Crowe, MDiv. DD, General Secretary, General Board of Church and Society, The United Methodist Church

The Rev. Stacy Martin, Director, Advocacy, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Director for Public Witness, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Sandy Sorensen, Director, Washington Office, United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

Cc: John Podesta