

## Commonsense Methane Protections at Risk

Oil and gas facilities are the nation's largest industrial source of methane pollution. Methane, also known as “natural” gas, is a powerful climate pollutant that is over 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide over a 20-year period. Alongside methane, oil and gas facilities also release toxic pollutants, such as volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which are linked to cancer and respiratory illnesses and contribute to the formation of ground-level ozone (smog). These climate and air pollutants are endangering the health of communities across the country right now, which is why over two dozen national health and medical organizations include addressing methane emissions as necessary for a healthier future.<sup>1</sup>

### Methane Emissions Reduction Program

One way to address methane emissions is through the Methane Emissions Reduction Program (MERP) that was passed as part of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) in 2022. This landmark program aims to reduce wasteful methane emissions from the oil and gas industry.

MERP is a commonsense, cost-effective program developed with input from industry and public health experts. It offers financial and technical support to oil and gas companies, especially small operators, to help detect and fix methane leaks, improve infrastructure, and adopt cleaner practices. At the same time, it holds high-emitting companies accountable for any wasted methane emissions over a certain threshold.

The program works in three key ways:

1. **Monitoring:** EPA's Greenhouse Gas Reporting Program requires oil and gas facilities that emit 25,000 metric tons or more greenhouse gases annually to report their emissions.<sup>2</sup> This data ensures transparency and helps target the worst emitters.

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<sup>1</sup> American Lung Association. A Declaration on Climate Change and Health. May 2025. [A Declaration on Climate Change and Health | American Lung Association](#)

<sup>2</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency. Subpart W – Petroleum and Natural Gas Systems. March 2025. [Subpart W – Petroleum and Natural Gas Systems | US EPA](#)

2. **Financial Assistance:** MERP provides grants, loans, and other support to help companies, especially smaller or independent operators, upgrade their equipment to reduce methane leaks.<sup>3</sup>
3. **Waste Emissions Charge:** Facilities that continue to release excessive amounts of methane are subject to a fee.<sup>4</sup> This charge, which works in coordination with EPA regulations, creates a strong financial incentive for companies to reduce emissions while leveling the playing field for those who are already complying with federal regulations.

### **A Win for Public Health, Industry, and the Climate**

MERP reduces energy waste, improves air quality, and protects the health of communities, particularly children, older adults, and people with asthma or other respiratory conditions. It also rewards innovation in the oil and gas industry, reduces lost products, and encourages long-term efficiency.

Public support is strong: a recent poll by the Global Methane Hub found that 7 in 10 Americans favor holding oil and gas companies accountable for methane leaks.<sup>5</sup>

### **These Protections Are Now Under Threat**

Despite their clear benefits, some members of Congress are pushing to delay MERP by 10 years, threatening to gut the program before it can deliver results. This delay would:

- Stall progress toward cleaner air and healthier communities.
- Undermine climate goals during a critical window for action – with methane being responsible for 45% of recent net warming.
- Rob companies of the tools and incentives they need to modernize operations and reduce waste.

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<sup>3</sup> National Energy Technology Laboratory. Methane Emissions Reduction Program Technical & Financial Assistance. Accessed May 2025. [Methane Emissions Reduction Program | netl.doe.gov](https://www.netl.doe.gov)

<sup>4</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency. Fact Sheet. Final Rule: Waste Emissions Charge for Petroleum and Natural Gas Systems. November 2024. [https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-11/wec-final-fact-sheet\\_11-2024.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-11/wec-final-fact-sheet_11-2024.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Global Methane Hub. As First Congressional Review Act is set to gut popular policy, New Poll Shows Vast Majority of Americans Support “Methane Fee”. February 2025. [New Poll Shows Vast Majority of Americans Support “Methane Fee” - Global Methane Hub](https://www.globalmethanehub.org/news/new-poll-shows-vast-majority-of-americans-support-methane-fee)

We cannot afford to wait another 10 years. The Methane Emissions Reduction Program is a practical, bipartisan solution that protects people, saves resources, and supports cleaner energy. Congress must protect MERP—not delay it.

## **Section 111**

Under Section 111 of the Clean Air Act, EPA finalized strong methane standards to cut pollution from the oil and gas industry. Proposed in 2021 and finalized in 2023, the rule applies to both new and existing oil and gas operations, the first-time existing sources have been included.<sup>6</sup>

The rule requires regular inspections to detect and fix methane leaks across all well sites, including smaller, low-producing and inactive ones. Sites with equipment known to fail frequently must be inspected at least every three months. The rule also restricts routine flaring, the practice of burning off excess gas, which wastes energy and pollutes nearby communities.

To find and fix the biggest leaks faster, the EPA created a new Super-Emitter Program. It allows qualified third parties to report large methane emissions (over 100 kilograms per hour) using advanced detection technologies. When such a leak is reported, the EPA notifies the operator, who must take action, and posts the notice publicly in real-time so communities are informed and can protect their health.

This rule is a major step toward reducing methane while creating jobs and improving public health. Section 111 is also currently under threat and must be protected alongside all other federal methane protections.

## **Defend Our Healthy Air**

We cannot afford to wait another 10 years to take action on methane pollution. The Methane Emissions Reduction Program is a commonsense, bipartisan solution that protects public health, conserves resources and improves air quality. At the same time, the EPA's Section 111 methane standards must be defended alongside all federal methane safeguards. Congress must act now to protect both MERP and Section 111 to ensure healthier communities, cleaner air and a safer climate for all.

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<sup>6</sup> Columbia Law School. Columbia Climate School. Sabin Center for Climate Change Law. EPA Proposes Methane Emissions Controls for Oil and Gas Sources. Accessed June 4 2025.

