

April 23, 2018

Dear Secretary Zinke:

The Bureau of Land Management Methane Waste Prevention rule is a safeguard for many states' economies, for our communities' health, and for the safety of our climate. As leaders in the Black church, united in our shared commitment to responsible environmental stewardship and the protection of human health, we write to ask that you hold hearings and extend the comment period on this critical rule.

Protecting this energy source from waste is of vital importance to our communities since methane leaks have a devastating impact on communities of color and God's creation.

Each year, the oil and gas industry dumps about nine million tons of methane and toxic pollutants into our nation's air. Over one million African Americans live in counties that face a cancer risk above the EPA's level of concern from toxics emitted by natural gas facilities.

In addition, natural gas waste shortchanges taxpayers by millions of dollars because royalties aren't collected from methane leaked, vented or flared into the air. These are revenues that could be used to assist communities to invest in schools, libraries, or infrastructure. The methane currently being leaked could heat more than 1 million homes if only captured and used.

The proposed rescission or revision of the Bureau of Land Management's 2016 Methane Waste Prevention Rule puts our community health in jeopardy and wastes taxpayers' money. This Bureau of Land Management Methane Waste Prevention Rule is about responsible energy stewardship, as well as protecting the air we breathe: It is designed to stop leaking, venting and flaring of methane from oil and gas wells on public lands.

The comment period for the repeal of the Methane Waste Prevention Rule is too short. Communities that bear the worst impacts of methane pollution need more time to weigh in.

We respectfully request that you extend the comment period and provide impacted communities an opportunity to weigh in during hearings and other public forums.

Sincerely,

Bishop Carroll Baltimore, Global United Fellowship
Lorton, VA

Rev. Gregory King, Sr.
Treasurer, Creation Justice Ministries
Social Justice Minister, Seventh Episcopal District, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
Richmond, VA

Bishop Staccato Powell
Western Episcopal District, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
Board Member, Creation Justice Ministries

Rev. Amos Lewis
President-Paradise Missionary Baptist State Convention
Pastor-Rising Star Baptist Church
Tucson, AZ

Rev. Joe Hardwick
President-Western Baptist State Convention-CA
Pastor-Praises of Zion Baptist
Los Angeles, CA

Bishop George McKinney
Jurisdictional Bishop - 2nd Jurisdiction Church of God In Christ
Pastor-St. Stephens C.O.I.C.
San Diego, CA

Rev. E. Wayne Gaddis, Sr.
President-CA Missionary Baptist States Convention, Inc.
Pastor-Greater True Light Baptist
Los Angeles, CA

Presiding Elder George E. Kent
Los Angeles District – Southwest Rocky Mountain Conference
AME Zion Church
Los Angeles, CA

Presiding Elder William Hogans
Southwest Rocky Mountain Conference
Western Episcopal District-AME Zion Church
CO

Rev. Frank M. Davis
Zion Baptist Church
Denver, CO

Rev. Eugene Downing, Jr.
New Hope Baptist Church
Denver, CO

Rev. Staccato Powell, Jr.
Spottswood A.M.E. Zion Church
Denver, CO

Presiding Elder O. Lacy Evans
Kentucky Conference, Mid-West Episcopal District
AME Zion Church
KY

Rev. B.T. Bishop
President, Kentucky Baptist Missionary/Education Convention
Pastor-First Baptist Church
Elizabethtown, KY

Bishop John Fleming
Prelate-Kentucky 1st Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction
Remnant C.O.G.I.C. Church
Louisville, KY

Presiding Elder Ronald Bailey
Mid-West Episcopal District
AME Zion Church
MI

Rev. Roy L. Manning, Sr.
President, Wolverine State Baptist Convention, Inc.
Pastor, Corinthian Missionary Baptist Church
Saginaw, MI

Bishop Samuel Duncan, Jr.
Prelate-Michigan Southwest 3rd Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction
Lansing Church of God in Christ
Lansing, MI

Bishop Michael Cole, Prelate
ND Jurisdictional Bishop
Gospel Outreach Ministries
Grand Forks, ND

Rev. Joe L. Callahan, Sr.
President-Mt Olive Baptist Convention of New Mexico
Pastor, St. John Missionary Baptist Church
Clovis, NM

Bishop J. L'Keith Jones
Prelate-New Mexico
Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction C.O.G.I.C
New Mexico Church of God In Christ
Albuquerque, NM

Rev. Elliott Cuff
Dean, National Baptist Congress Christian Education
NBC USA, Inc
Pastor, Lincoln Heights MBC
Cincinnati, OH

Rev. Otha Gilyard
President, Ohio Baptist General Convention of Ohio
Pastor, Shiloh Baptist Church
Columbus, OH

Presiding Elder Melonie A. Valentine
Ohio-South Ohio-Cincinnati-Dayton District
3rd Episcopal District, AME Church
OH

Rev. Bruce N. Alick
President, Pennsylvania Baptist States Convention, Inc.
Pastor, Mt Zion Baptist Church
Germantown, PA

Rev. Terrence D. Griffith
Executive Secretary-Foreign Mission Board, NBC USA, Inc.
Pastor, First African Baptist Church
Philadelphia, PA

Presiding Elder James McLemore
Pittsburg-W. V. Conference/Pittsburg District – 3rd Episcopal District
A.M.E. Church
PA

Presiding Elder Julius Clay
Philadelphia District, 7th Episcopal District
C.M.E. Church
PA

Rev. Charles R. Whitfield
President
VA Baptist State Convention
Pastor, First Baptist Church
East Martinsville, VA

Bishop Ted G. Thomas, Sr.

Prelate, 1st Jurisdiction of Virginia
New Community C.O.G.I.C.
Portsmouth, VA

Presiding Elder Chester Morris
Norfolk District/VA Conference
2nd Episcopal District, A.M.E. Church
VA

Presiding Elder Quentin J. White
Portsmouth, Richmond, Roanoke Districts/VA Conference
2nd Episcopal District, A.M.E. Church
VA

Rev. France Davis
Vice President/Far West Region, National Baptist Congress
NBC USA, Inc.
Pastor, Calvary Baptist Church
Salt Lake City, UT