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DAVID WATKINS
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

U.S. House of Representatives

Committee on Natural Resources

Washington, DC 20515

January 9, 2017

Dear Democratic Colleague:

Last week, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy was quoted saying that two regulations issued by the Department of the Interior—the Stream Protection Rule (SPR) and the Methane Waste Prevention Rule (MWPR)—would be among the first two recently-finalized regulations targeted under the Congressional Review Act (CRA), inaccurately claiming these regulations, “are limits to our energy production.” In fact, these two regulations contain critical health, environmental, and fiscal protections for the American people, and repealing them via the CRA would be a colossal waste of taxpayer money for the sole benefit of the oil, gas, and coal industries.

Both rules are the result of exhaustive work over numerous years by the Department of the Interior. Work on the Stream Protection Rule began in 2009, and subsequently was the subject of over four years of fruitless Republican investigations trying to identify political misconduct and numerous legislative attempts to block the rule from ever being issued. However, there have been zero hearings in the House of Representatives on the actual substance of the SPR since the proposal was unveiled in July 2015. Likewise, the Methane Waste Rule seeks to modernize and improve outdated 35-year-old standards on venting and flaring and comes after a years-long public process of input and comment, yet there have been no hearings on that rule since it was finalized in November. Rather than an open discussion on the merits of these rules, the House Majority has simply parroted industry talking points and scare tactics. Meanwhile, it doesn’t appear as if the oil, gas, or coal industries are even reading the rules that they are railing against: an industry lawsuit against the MWPR was filed the same day that the final rule was announced. Repealing these regulations through the CRA asks Members to take industry’s word and to side with the industry while ignoring the significant benefits these rules provide to the American people.

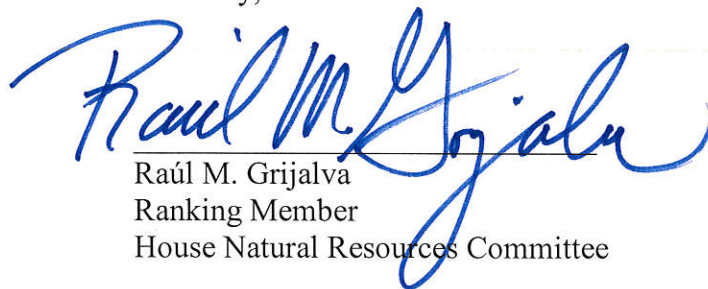
Mountaintop removal coal mining—the main practice affected by the SPR—is one of the most destructive resource extraction methods known, involving blowing the tops of mountains and dumping the remaining rubble into the valley below. Over 2,000 miles of Appalachian streams and rivers have been buried by this process, which also degrades the quality of other water sources, destroys wildlife habitat, and, as an increasing body of peer-reviewed literature shows, has significant negative impacts on human health, with people living near mountaintop

removal coal mines suffering from higher rates of heart disease, lung cancer, birth defects, and other illnesses. The Stream Protection Rule would help alleviate their suffering by updating 30-year-old regulations and establishing new protections and standards based on the latest science and technology.

Repealing the Methane Waste Prevention Rule would also seriously harm taxpayers. This rule would cut down on the amount of natural gas that companies are allowed to vent, flare, or leak from federal leases – a waste of federal and tribal natural gas resources currently estimated to be \$330 million per year. Natural gas on federal lands belongs to the American people, and they receive a share of the proceeds from the sale of that gas. When that gas is wasted, not only does a valuable commodity get frittered away, but the revenue owed to the American people evaporates as well. The MWPR would result in the savings and productive use of up to 41 billion cubic feet annually—an amount of gas that could supply roughly 740,000 households each year. This level of waste is unconscionable, and companies should be required to make the investments necessary to capture that natural gas and pay the American people their fair share. By stopping the Methane Waste Prevention Rule, the House Majority would be allowing the oil and gas industry to get off the hook at the expense of the American taxpayer.

For the past eight years, the Republican Party has echoed the anti-regulatory talking points of the fossil fuel industry. But now instead of simply attacking President Obama's agenda, they are preparing to actually repeal health, safety, fiscal, and environmental protections that President Obama provided the American people. As Democrats, we choose to side with the American people instead of corporate profits, hometowns over hedge funds, and every man, woman, and child over ExxonMobil. Please join me in fighting these misguided and destructive Republican efforts.

Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee