

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 23, 2015

The Honorable Secretary Sally Jewell
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St NW
Washington DC, 20049

Dear Secretary Jewell:

We want to applaud your recent acknowledgement that the Interior Department has untapped opportunities for addressing climate change. While the Obama Administration has been proactively working to reduce the carbon footprint of federal buildings, supply chains, and the power sector, there remains a sizeable “blind spot” in the nation’s approach to addressing climate change: the greenhouse gases released due to resources extracted from our public lands and waters.

Your March speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies highlighted this opportunity and outlined a number of ways for the Department of the Interior to prioritize climate change impacts on federal lands. We strongly support your conclusion that, “[W]e also need to do more to address the causes of climate change. Helping our nation cut carbon pollution should inform our decisions about where we develop, how we develop, and what we develop.”

One large source of carbon pollution from federal lands comes from venting and flaring methane during oil and gas development. According to a recent report by The Wilderness Society and the Center for American Progress, the amount of methane lost annually from federal lands through these wasteful practices more than doubled between 2008 and 2013, contributing significantly to the U.S. carbon footprint. Further, since royalties are not generally paid on gas that is vented or flared, these practices shortchange taxpayers for the development of their resources.

It is time for national leaders to develop solutions that provide cost-effective, reliable energy resources and address the imperative to safeguard public health and the environment from the impacts of global warming. As an important first step, we urge you to rein in the wasteful, counterproductive practices of venting and flaring and complete your update of commonsense rules to detect and minimize fugitive emissions, thereby reducing methane waste at federal oil and gas development sites.

A few states have already successfully implemented their own rules to expose and curb methane emissions--with Colorado’s robust plan leading the nation--and we hope you consider these comprehensive regulations when crafting the national rules. Further, many cost-effective technologies are already on the market that would reduce emissions at a minimal cost to

developers. States like Colorado have seen the regulation of methane correspond directly to the growth of an industry and creation of skilled, high-paying jobs surrounding these technologies. Requiring the utilization of these technologies nationally would not only be good for the wellness and wallets of the American taxpayer, but it would support the growing U.S. methane mitigation industry.

Given the vast energy resources managed by the Department of the Interior, it is crucial that you lead the effort to ensure our public lands are part of the national solution to climate change, not part of the problem. Strong regulations to significantly reduce methane waste will ensure that someday our public lands will change from being a carbon source to a carbon sink, and be hailed as a major component of the U.S. climate change strategy.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue, and we look forward to working with you to ensure strong federal action on climate change and smart energy policy on federal lands.

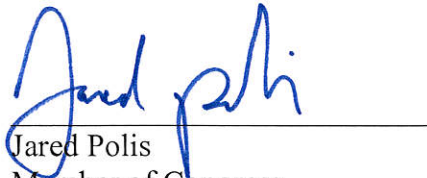
Sincerely,



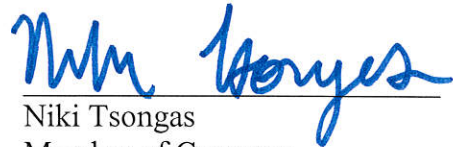
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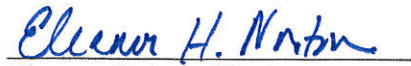
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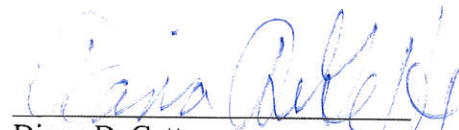


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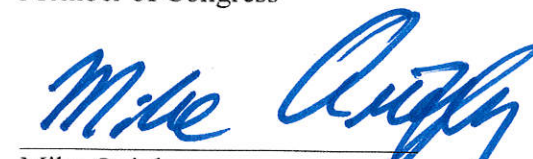

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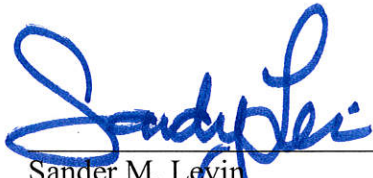

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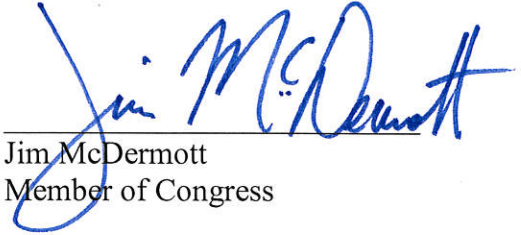
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