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April 8, 2016

The Honorable Senator Tom Udall
The Honorable Senator Martin Heinrich
The Honorable Representative Ben Ray Luján
The Honorable Representative Michelle Lujan Grisham

Dear Senators Udall and Heinrich and Representatives Luján and Lujan Grisham:

Our organizations thank you for your leadership in curbing methane waste from oil and gas operations on public and tribal lands in New Mexico.

Our state is at the epicenter of this important issue. In October 2014, NASA found a methane “hot spot” the size of Delaware hovering over the San Juan Basin. According to oil and gas industry data, the industry polluted more than 222,000 metric tons of methane in that region alone, and we believe that that is likely a conservative estimate.

The energy industry is incredibly important to our state. However, given that methane is the primary component of natural gas, it is unconscionable that this industry wastes upwards of \$101 million worth of natural gas each year through flaring, venting, and leaking methane on public and tribal lands.

In fact, wasted natural gas also means less tax revenue for our state. A March 2016 report found that New Mexico has lost as much as \$52.2 million in royalties since 2010 due to natural gas that oil and gas companies intentionally flared or vented on our public lands. This lost revenue could have been put to critical use helping to fund New Mexico’s public schools.

The good news is that we have the cost-effective technology today to capture methane and put valuable natural gas on the market. Other western states have successfully adopted strong rules to curb methane waste such as Colorado’s 2014 statewide air quality rule and Wyoming’s air quality strategies for the Upper Green River Basin. These states have paved the way, showing we can both cut methane waste while encouraging responsible energy development.

Moreover, the same technologies that companies deploy to address methane emissions will also reduce the dangerous volatile organic compounds that create ozone, trigger asthma attacks in children, and harm the health of our seniors, as well as other toxic air emissions such as benzene.

For all these reasons, we appreciate your leadership in curbing methane waste from our public and tribal lands in New Mexico. We urge your continued support and advocate that the U.S. Bureau of Land Management act swiftly to adopt a strong final rule.

Sincerely,



Veronica C García, Ed.D.
Executive Director
New Mexico Voices for Children
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Hank Hughes
Director
New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Huong D. Nguyen, MA, MPA
Outreach and Policy Specialist
New Mexico Asian Family Center (NMAFC)
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Pat Davis
Executive Director
ProgressNow New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Andrea Plaza
Executive Director
Encuentro New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Barbara Webber
Executive Director
Health Action New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

CC: Secretary Sally Jewell, U.S. Department of Interior; Neil Kornze, U.S. Bureau of Land Management