



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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Statement of Environment Subcommittee Chairman Jim Bridenstine (R-Okla.)
A Solution in Search of a Problem: EPA's Methane Regulation

Chairman Bridenstine: Good morning and welcome to this morning's hearing entitled: "A Solution In Search of a Problem: EPA's Methane Regulations".

Today's hearing will examine the impact of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) recent regulatory activity on methane gas. We will also discuss implementation, economic impacts, and other associated issues regarding the methane rules at the national and state level.

I am concerned about the EPA's expansive interpretation of its regulatory scope and its continued use of questionable scientific basis for rulemaking. My concern extends to EPA's methane rule.

This past May, EPA Administrator McCarthy stated that she will expedite issuing regulations for reducing methane emissions from existing sources. Rather than expedite methane regulation, EPA should take a breath and realize that the best available science does not support new rulemaking. But once again, EPA is back at it with cherry-picking and fudging data to fit a politically-driven agenda aided by a cabal of establishment environmentalists.

A study published earlier this year by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) scientists found that the expansion in oil and gas production is not to blame for a global increase in methane emissions, and according to the study's author, "the U.S. energy industry contributes little to the overall burden of global fossil fuel emissions." According to this NOAA study, wetlands, which naturally generate methane, and agriculture, from sources outside the United States, are the main contributors to emissions.

Here at home, the oil and gas industry has drastically cut methane emissions through responsible voluntary efforts. Technological advances under development and implemented by industry will only lead to further reductions, without the need for costly and burdensome EPA regulations.

Leading energy researchers, including the National Economic Research Associates, dispute and challenge EPA's claims that reducing methane leaks by 45% by 2025 will be equivalent to shutting down one-third of the world's coal-fired power plants. EPA is simply exaggerating their claims. A study by NERA concludes that the supposed benefits from EPA's methane rules are highly uncertain and very likely overstated.

The actual reduction in global temperatures is also minimal – Energy in Depth found that the rules would reduce global temperatures by a mere 0.004 degrees Celsius over the next 84 years. Even if we shut down and stopped all American oil and gas production, it will have no impact on global temperatures.

And the cherry-picking of science does not stop there. Issues of data-integrity have continually dogged EPA during and after the regulatory process behind the methane rules. Before the final methane rule for new sources was released, the EPA also conveniently increased its estimates of methane emissions from petroleum and natural gas systems, without specifically identifying these emissions. It conveniently revised the greenhouse gas inventory for methane, adding 85 million metric tons to the US methane emissions.

Of course, EPA released this report ahead of their final rule. And it gets worse – in order for EPA to justify their new-found activism, EPA assumed that marginal wells had emissions profiles similar to those of higher producing wells and claimed the use of “new methodology.” However, EPA had previously admitted that marginal wells have “inherently low” emissions.

What is clear and supported by the facts is that the recent economic boom experience is real. Communities have benefited tremendously from the resurgence of natural gas extraction when extracted safely and responsibly. While states like New York have seen good paying jobs and the associated economic benefits go to the wayside because of their moratorium on hydraulic fracturing for natural gas extraction, states like my home state of Oklahoma have experienced the opposite.

Ranking fifth in energy production, Oklahoma practices an “all of the above” strategy when it comes to energy. Last year, Oklahoma produced, an all-time high, 2.5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. That number indicates a 50% increase in production over 10 years. The increased production of natural gas has coincided with a decrease in methane emissions. Oklahoma is leading the way in demonstrating that responsible exploration and production with industry-led voluntary emission reduction practices realizes decreased emissions without burdensome mandates from the EPA. I would also like to applaud my Attorney General, Scott Pruitt, for joining the lawsuit challenging the methane emissions regulations.

As we will hear today, the shale revolution has not only revolutionized the US economy and has been responsible for creating good-paying jobs. Instead of focusing on environmental protection, the EPA is now pursuing a war on natural gas. I want to thank each of the witnesses for coming this afternoon and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today and yield back the balance of my time.

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