



PRESS RELEASE

Attorney General Frosh Joins Multistate Lawsuit Challenging Rollback of Regulations that Limit Methane Emissions

BALTIMORE, MD (September 14, 2020) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh joined a [lawsuit](#) challenging the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) final rule gutting standards that limit emissions of methane, volatile organic compounds, and other hazardous pollutants from new, reconstructed, and modified facilities in the oil and natural gas industry. Methane is a super-pollutant up to 87 times more potent than carbon dioxide in its ability to trap heat over a 20-year timeframe. According to the EPA’s own estimates, the rollback of these standards will increase emissions of methane by 850,000 tons between 2021 and 2030 – or 19,000,000 metric tons of CO2 equivalent – accelerating the impacts of climate change and threatening public health, particularly to children, older adults, and those suffering from chronic lung disease and asthma.

“Methane is an extremely potent greenhouse gas, and EPA intends to unleash enormous amounts on a world already on fire,” said Attorney General Frosh. “The huge blazes in the American West are ‘climate fires.’ Intentionally adding more methane to the atmosphere now is arsonous.”

Oil and natural gas operations – production, processing, transmission, and storage – are the largest single industrial source of methane emissions in the U.S. and the second largest industrial source of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions behind only electric power plants. Based on the EPA’s own data, the Environmental Defense Fund estimates that roughly \$1.5 billion worth of natural gas – enough to heat over 5 million homes – leaks or is intentionally released from the oil and gas supply chain each year. In an effort to address these emissions, the EPA finalized the first ever standards limiting methane emission from new, reconstructed, and modified sources in the oil and natural gas sector in 2016. The EPA estimated that the standards would prevent 510,000 tons of methane emissions and result in a net benefit of \$170 million in 2025.

On August 13, 2020, the EPA [announced](#) a set of rules gutting the 2016 standards. The rules include policy amendments rescinding requirements to regulate methane and removing the transmission and storage category entirely from regulation, as well as technical amendments rolling back leak detection and monitoring requirements. Together, these changes are expected to increase emissions of methane, volatile organic compounds, and other hazardous air pollutants by 850,000, 140,000, and 5,000 tons respectively by 2030.

In today’s lawsuit challenging the policy amendments, the coalition argues that the EPA’s rollback of the standards violates the Clean Air Act because it arbitrarily eliminates pollution

controls from the transmission and storage segment of the oil and natural gas sector and entirely abandons the regulation of methane without any justification.

The coalition of states and municipalities intends to file a lawsuit challenging the technical amendments following their publication in the Federal Register.

Attorney General Frosh joins the attorneys general of California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and the District of Columbia, as well as the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, the City and County of Denver, and the City of Chicago in filing the lawsuit.