



April 4, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

Thank you very much for your work regarding the President's Executive Order (EO) on Promoting Energy Independence and Economic Growth. We appreciate that you and President Trump are fulfilling promises to undo the burdensome red tape constraining domestic energy production and killing jobs. We appreciate your leadership on refocusing the Department of the Interior (DOI) back to its core mission of responsibly managing public lands for multiple use and away from prioritizing climate change analysis over all else. The oil and natural gas industry has enabled real U.S. leadership on climate change; by enabling increased natural gas electricity generation, we have delivered more greenhouse gas reductions than any overreaching federal climate change policy, and the United States now leads the world in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Western Energy Alliance represents over 300 companies engaged in all aspects of environmentally responsible exploration and production of oil and natural gas in the West. Alliance members are independents, the majority of which are small businesses with an average of fifteen employees.

Thank you also for your efforts to persuade reluctant Senators to vote to overturn the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) waste prevention rule, otherwise known as the methane rule, using the Congressional Review Act (CRA). While we very much appreciate that the rule was included in the EO for review and rescission, doing so through the EO is of course just the start of a long process of rulemaking and inevitable follow-on litigation by environmental groups that will consume considerable resources of your staff. A clean break using the CRA would free up agency resources from the required rulemaking and messy litigation that will invariably drag on for years. We urge you to continue convincing Senators to use the CRA, and not allow them to hide behind the EO as an excuse to vote against it or never bring it to the Senate floor.

In light of your Secretarial Order 3349 requiring the BLM Director to report within 21 days on the methane rule, we would like to offer our thoughts on next steps. First and foremost, it is clear the methane rule is markedly inconsistent with the EO and we encourage your staff to expeditiously make this determination, ideally far in advance of the 21 day deadline. Because the methane rule has already gone into effect, the proper

rulemaking to rescind it and ensure that the repeal can stand up in a court of law must be done in a deliberative manner per the Administrative Procedures Act. In the meantime, our members are beginning to incur significant costs to implement it. The overly prescriptive leak detection and repair, and storage tank, auto igniter, and pneumatic device retrofit provisions require companies to begin purchasing and installing tens of thousands of replacement parts in the very near future. We ask that DOI expeditiously publish a notice in the Federal Register to suspend the rule in light of the fact that the follow-on rulemaking process will likely take several months. Since a suspension requires a thirty-day public notice and comment period, we respectfully request that this first step happen as soon as possible.

In addition, Western Energy Alliance is one of two industry plaintiffs challenging the rule in court. Filing a suspension will help clarify the Administration's position with respect to the litigation, which has been thrown into much uncertainty. Parties to the litigation may either attempt to suspend the litigation in light of the EO, or push to continue the litigation on its current schedule despite its very uncertain future. Should either occur without a suspension of the rule, companies will continue to incur costs for a very burdensome rule which is likely in one way or another to be overturned, without industry and the government being any nearer to getting clarity from the courts.

Thank you again for your leadership on reorienting DOI to promote energy independence, create jobs, and stimulate economic growth. We look forward to working with you as your department implements the Executive and Secretarial Orders, and stand ready to assist you in any way we can.

Sincerely,



Kathleen M. Sgamma
President

cc: Mike Nedd, BLM Director (Acting)