

April XX, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

We write to encourage you to solidify the U.S. position as a global leader in combatting climate change by including a methane emissions reduction target as part of the upcoming nationally determined contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement. We thank you for rejoining the Paris Agreement, organizing the upcoming Leaders Summit on Climate, and for prioritizing the urgent climate crisis in Executive Order 14008. The impending NDC announcement provides a critical opportunity to meet the worsening climate crisis with bold solutions, including through a reduction in methane emissions.

The inclusion of a specific methane emissions reduction target in the broader NDC and the discussion of methane emissions at the Leaders Summit would help address near-term global warming, support global methane reductions, and strengthen our national response to the climate crisis. Methane pollution is a significant and immediate risk to the global climate. It is the primary component of natural gas and is roughly 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide over a 20-year period.¹ Additionally, methane accounts for around one-quarter of global warming, and that share continues to rise due to emissions from fossil fuel and agricultural sources.² Despite

¹ Environmental Protection Agency GHG Emissions Home, *Understanding Global Warming Potentials*, <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/understanding-global-warming-potentials> (last accessed Apr. 16, 2021).

² Jackson, *et al.*, *Increasing anthropogenic methane emissions arise equally from agricultural and fossil fuel sources*, *Environ. Res. Lett.* (Jul. 2020), published online Jul. 15, 2020, <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/ab9ed2>.

the economic downturn from the COVID-19 pandemic, these emission levels surged in 2020, exhibiting the largest annual increase recorded in recent decades.³

A 40-percent reduction in methane emissions by 2030 is already technically feasible through the use of existing technology and regulatory frameworks.⁴ More vigilance from the fossil fuel industry would result in significant methane reductions. Indeed, the use of currently available technology, such as technology to detect and repair methane leaks,⁵ could achieve a 75-percent decrease in methane pollution. And enforcing rules to reduce methane emissions from the oil and gas industry, issued under existing Clean Air Act authority, could achieve approximately 60 percent of the 2030 reduction goal.⁶

Momentum is building for international action to curb dangerous methane pollution and mitigate the immediate threat of accelerated global warming. Cutting methane emissions globally will avoid nearly 0.3 degrees Celsius of warming by 2040.⁷ We urge you to include a specific methane target in the NDC in order to meet the target of keeping temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The United States has an opportunity to cement its position as a global leader through robust methane reduction targets and strategies, and can use that leadership to support other countries in making similar pledges. At the Leaders Summit on Climate, we encourage you to raise the urgent need to address methane pollution.

We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter. If you have any questions about this request, please contact [REDACTED] on my staff at (202) 224-2742.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

³ Theo Stein, *Despite pandemic shutdowns, carbon dioxide and methane surged in 2020*, NOAA Research News (Apr. 7, 2021) <https://research.noaa.gov/article/ArtMID/587/ArticleID/2742/Despite-pandemic-shutdowns-carbon-dioxide-and-methane-surged-in-2020>.

⁴ Environmental Defense Fund, *Recapturing U.S. Leadership on Climate: Setting an Ambitious and Credible Nationally Determined Contribution* (Mar. 2021), <https://www.edf.org/sites/default/files/documents/Recapturing%20U.S.%20Leadership%20on%20Climate.pdf>.

⁵ International Energy Agency, *Methane Emissions from Oil and Gas* (Jun. 2020), <https://www.iea.org/reports/methane-emissions-from-oil-and-gas>.

⁶ Environmental Defense Fund, *Recapturing U.S. Leadership on Climate: Setting an Ambitious and Credible Nationally Determined Contribution* (Mar. 2021), <https://www.edf.org/sites/default/files/documents/Recapturing%20U.S.%20Leadership%20on%20Climate.pdf>.

⁷ Climate & Clean Air Coalition secretariat, *Methane's links to respiratory diseases strengthens the case for rapid reduction*, Climate & Clean Air Coalition (Mar. 22, 2021), <https://www.ccacoalition.org/en/news/methane's-links-respiratory-diseases-strengthens-case-its-rapid-reduction>.

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