

Issue: PA-Environment and Economy

## Talking Points—It's a Win: Good Jobs and Cleaner Air

Pennsylvania has a golden opportunity to affordably improve air quality and reduce climate change by reducing methane leaks—all while creating many good jobs. Oil and gas industries leak vast amounts of methane at every point in production. Over a million tons of methane per year is leaking in Pennsylvania alone; methane is one of the most potent greenhouse gases.

Oil and gas companies sell methane, so leaks represent lost product and revenue. Reducing methane leaks will improve the reputation of the oil and gas industry, seen by many as incompatible with a clean energy economy. This is why many industry leaders are setting their own goals for emissions reductions.

The economy will benefit as a result of the jobs created to address the problem of methane leakage. Leak detection and measurement requires equipment ranging from simple handheld detectors to lasers, drones and satellites. New jobs created in Leak Detection and Repair (LDAR) technology pay well and provide good benefits, with annual salaries ranging from \$31,000 for high school graduates hired as technicians to well over \$100,000 for more experienced field or technical positions.

However, progress in controlling methane leaks depends on regulatory support. Regulatory agencies need resources to ensure adequate permitting, report collection, and enforcement. The economy can only reap the full benefit of capturing leaking methane with (a) a strong legal framework, (b) laws and rules designed to accommodate innovation and change, and (c) sufficient regulatory funding and support. Unfortunately, the staffing of the Pennsylvania Department of Environment Protection (DEP) has shrunk nearly 30% since 2002, even as the energy industry has experienced massive growth.

The Obama administration put the first federal methane emissions controls into effect in 2016, focusing mostly on new oil and gas infrastructure, with the intent to address older equipment later. In August 2020, the Trump administration repealed these rules. In Pennsylvania, Governor Wolf took action with a 2018 Executive Order to change the Pennsylvania DEP permit requirements for new equipment to be in line with the Obama administration's rules. Unfortunately, lack of compliance and enforcement of these rules has complicated meaningful emissions reductions. Governor Wolf's other efforts to address greenhouse gas emissions at the state level have been blocked by Republican lawmakers.

Pennsylvania's regulatory environment needs fundamental changes to affect the significant reduction in methane emissions that citizens need. Republican members of the State Senate and House have referred all environmental-related legislation to committees where the bills sit, unvoted on. Even many oil and gas companies (BP, Exxon and Shell among them) support emission controls, along with a majority of Pennsylvania voters across all areas.

Why do Republican State Senators and House members stand in the way of this urgently important initiative? We don't know, but their refusal to act suggests that Democrats are the better stewards of the state's environment and business interests.

Our complete paper, [Methane Leak Control and Jobs](https://www.localmajority.org/research-reports/#PA-methane) is available at <https://www.localmajority.org/research-reports/#PA-methane>