

To: Morrell, Geoff [REDACTED]@bp.com]
Cc: Streett, Mary [REDACTED]@bp.com]; Ellis, Joe [REDACTED]@bp.com]; Nicholas, David H [REDACTED]@bp.com]; Baldino, Megan [REDACTED]@bp.com]; Hicks, Joshua [REDACTED]@bp.com]
From: Fielder, JP [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=0627B74B04644118B1513A7479EA11BF-FIELDER, JO]
Sent: Wed 28/04/2021 9:58:04 PM (UTC)
Subject: for awareness: WaPo Mary Streett quote

Geoff,

Redacted - First Amendment

Senate votes to restore Obama-era limits on methane gas emissions

The measure still must pass the House before being sent to the president's desk. It marks Democrats' first use of the 1996 Congressional Review Act.

By
Tik Root,
Juliet Eilperin and
Brady Dennis
April 28, 2021 at 4:22 p.m. CDT

The Senate voted on Wednesday to restore an Obama-era regulation that imposed limits on methane leaks from oil and gas operations.

The move marks both the first major congressional rebuke of former president Donald Trump's environmental policies, and a step forward for the Biden administration's ambitious climate agenda.

"We have to stop lighting the matches of methane pollution," Sen. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), one of the bill's co-sponsors, said at a news conference Wednesday morning.

The vote is also the first time Democrats have used the 1996 Congressional Review Act to reverse a federal regulation.

The measure cleared the divided Senate by a 52 to 42 vote. It is expected to easily pass the House and would then head to President Biden's desk.

President Biden has called limiting methane emissions — a powerful greenhouse gas that, when released without being burned, has more than 80 times the climate impact of carbon dioxide — key to his pledge to cut U.S. emissions by at least 50 percent by the end of the decade.

"This is a really encouraging step because methane is such an important greenhouse gas to reduce," Drew Shindell, an earth science professor at Duke University, said of Wednesday's vote. "It sends a signal that the administration is serious about this."

In 2016, the Environmental Protection Agency adopted a rule requiring oil and gas companies to curb methane leaks and emissions from their operations. Late last summer, the Trump administration undid it. The Senate vote is a step toward undoing that reversal.

If enacted, the resolution would restore requirements on companies to check for methane leaks from pipelines, storage tanks and other equipment installed after 2015 every six months — and plug them within 30 days after a leak is detected.

The Congressional Review Act gives lawmakers the power to nullify any regulation within 60 days of enactment and dictates that once a regulation is revoked, no new "substantially similar" regulation can be adopted. Requiring only a simple majority vote, it is the swiftest way to overturn an existing federal rule. Otherwise, it would take at least a year, if not longer, for an agency to rewrite it.

Before Trump took office, the CRA had been successfully used only once, to overturn a Clinton administration ergonomics rule in 2001. Republicans used the law more than a dozen times to overturn Obama administration rules in 2017, including one aimed at blocking coal-mining operations from dumping waste into

nearby waterways and another requiring that oil, gas and mining companies divulge more information to the Securities and Exchange Commission about the payments they make to foreign governments. Speaking to reporters Wednesday, Sen. Angus King (I-Maine) said the vote amounts to “a repeal of a repeal,” which would effectively restore the original EPA rule.

Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) added, “We can undue that damage and undo it quickly.”

In recent years, methane emissions have been on a troubling upward spike. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported this month that levels showed a “significant jump” in 2020, marking “the largest annual increase recorded since systematic measurements began in 1983.”

“It’s moving really rapidly in the wrong direction,” said Shindell. He is among an international collection of scientists who found as part of a forthcoming United Nations assessment, that “reducing human-caused methane emissions is one of the most cost-effective strategies to rapidly reduce the rate of warming” and meet the world’s climate targets.

The good news, he added, is that “we can do a lot on methane with existing technologies.”

A full-scale push using existing technology could cut methane emissions in half by 2030, according to a study published in the journal *Environmental Research Letters*. Such reductions could have a crucial effect on the global effort to limit warming below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) compared with preindustrial levels — a central aim of the Paris climate accord.

But some Republicans say that restoring the old rule is unnecessary. “The market is pushing the industry to lower its methane emissions,” Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-WVa.) said during debate on the measure Wednesday. “The resolution we have in front of us today is nothing more than a public posturing.”

Biden has targeted 100 of Trump’s energy and environmental policies since taking office, according to a Washington Post analysis, and has reversed 28 of them so far. Most of these were not regulations, however, but rather agency policies or executive orders. In some instances, recent federal court rulings have nullified Trump-era rules.

Many in the oil and gas industry have backed the effort to restore the Obama-era rule. Major companies such as BP and Royal Dutch Shell have endorsed it, along with some of the industry’s trade associations.

“Regulating methane emissions is essential to preventing leaks throughout the industry and protecting the environment,” Mary Streett, BP’s senior vice president for U.S. advocacy, said in a statement.

Such level of industry support may not exist on other climate initiatives. Still, Schumer said he sees Wednesday’s vote as the start of a broader legislative push on climate, and a move that can help achieve Biden’s climate goals.

“It is one of the first things we’ve done to fight global warming,” Schumer said. “It will certainly not be the last.”