

**Committee on Energy and Commerce**

**Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery  
of  
Subcommittee on Environment, Manufacturing, and Critical Materials Ranking Member  
Paul D. Tonko**

***Hearing on “Protecting Clean American Energy Production and Jobs by Stopping EPA’s  
Overreach”***

**January 10, 2024**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to start by thanking you for your partnership on the Subcommittee over the past year. I wish you and your family all the best as you begin your next chapter back in Ohio. But before you leave us, we have a very important hearing on EPA’s activities to address methane pollution. Methane is an incredibly potent greenhouse gas with 84 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide over a 20-year period. It is estimated to be responsible for one-third of the warming we experience today. As the United States, in cooperation with the international community, works to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, addressing methane is a critical part of achieving a safe and sustainable climate. Since the U.S. oil and gas sector is such a major source of methane emissions, I have been very pleased to see the attention provided by EPA to tackle this challenge.

This includes finalizing a New Source Performance Standards rule last month, which is estimated to reduce methane emissions from these sources by 80% and provide nearly \$100 billion in net benefits to Americans from 2024 to 2038. These benefits include as much as \$13 billion in value from recovered natural gas, which, if wasted, consumers would still pay for. EPA is also actively working to implement the Methane Emissions Reduction Program, enacted as part of the historic Inflation Reduction Act. In this provision, Congress directed EPA to do three things.

First, to improve transparency and reporting to ensure emitters are accurately accounting for their emissions. Second, to provide more than \$1.5 billion in financial assistance to support deployment of monitoring and mitigation technologies. And finally, to impose a charge on large facilities that fail to adequately control their emissions. I am very supportive of the work EPA has done— and will continue to do— to reduce methane pollution. In fact, I would support even bolder actions to strengthen rules for other major sources of methane, such as landfills, and taking other steps to limit air pollution from fossil fuels.

However, I suspect today we will not find consensus on EPA’s agenda because I fundamentally disagree with the majority’s framing of this hearing. First: the suggestion that these actions are somehow an attack on clean energy production. The science is clear. Any claims about the climate benefits of fuel switching to natural gas are undermined when that gas is produced with significant amounts of fugitive methane emissions.

And as monitoring technology has improved in recent years, we have begun to better understand just how undercounted these emissions have been. And second: the majority has suggested— as has become common in the 118th Congress— that EPA is acting inappropriately and overreaching. Under the Clean Air Act, EPA has a responsibility to address major sources of air pollution, including methane, as they have done with their recent rule. And they have finalized a rule that provides overwhelming net benefits to the American people.

EPA also has a responsibility to carry out new laws enacted by Congress, including the Inflation Reduction Act. I appreciate that my colleagues in the majority do not support the Methane Emissions Reduction Program, as evidenced by their numerous, unsuccessful attempts to repeal this provision. They do not support the more than \$1.5 billion dollars being provided to the private sector to deploy methane monitoring and mitigation technologies. And they do not support holding large polluters accountable through a methane charge.

So, while they clearly would like EPA to not implement this provision, I find it hard to believe that they could accuse EPA of overreaching for merely following the law. I am very proud of the work Democrats in Congress have done to provide EPA with the authority and direction necessary to take meaningful action to reduce a climate super pollutant. And honestly, I believe EPA should be doing even more to support the rapid transition of our energy system away from unabated emissions from fossil fuels.

American oil and gas production is at record highs. Industry is raking in massive profits. I do not think it is too much to suggest that the largest of these emitters take cost-effective steps to control their pollution.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to today's hearing, and especially to learn more about how American innovation is enabling improvements to technologies to better detect, fix, and prevent methane leaks, and how we can ensure that the oil and gas industry adopts these cost-effective solutions.

Thank you. I yield back.