

MOTION OF THE COUNCIL OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY

Encouraging the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to finalize a strong methane rule that closes the existing loophole for low-producing wells.

Whereas, low producing wells (as defined by the Environmental Defense Fund as wells producing less than 15 barrels of oil equivalent per day) are responsible for more than half of the methane pollution from oil and gas sources, per the Journal of the Air & Waste Management Association: Vol 70, No 10 (tandfonline.com); and

Whereas, in terms of greenhouse gas properties, methane is over 80 times more potent than carbon oxides in the first 20 years it is released into the atmosphere, according to the Environmental Defense Fund; and

Whereas, rapidly reducing methane emissions could potentially slow the rate of climate warming by as much as 30%, according to the Environmental Defense Fund (<https://www.edf.org/media/study-cutting-methane-emissions-quickly-could-slow-climate-warming-rate-30>), and is therefore critical to slowing climate change and planning for our future; and

Whereas, studies show that many wells that produce less than a barrel of oil equivalent per day leak methane into the atmosphere at more than 100 percent of their reported gas production, per the Journal of the Air & Waste Management Association: Vol 70, No 10 (tandfonline.com); and

Whereas, methane is the primary component of natural gas and cutting emissions will allow companies to capture more product and create more revenue, according to data promulgated by the International Energy Agency (<https://www.iea.org/reports/methane-tracker-2020/methane-abatement-options>); and

Whereas, according to data published by the U.S. Energy Information Administration, Pennsylvania is the second largest natural gas producing state, and it is therefore the judgment of Council that the Commonwealth has a responsibility to step up and be a national leader in reducing harmful methane and air pollution; and

Whereas, this conclusion is bolstered by the fact that Pennsylvania is the third largest greenhouse gas polluting state, per data disseminated by the World Resources Institute (<https://www.wri.org/insights/6-charts-understand-us-state-greenhouse-gas-emissions>); and

Whereas, it is the judgment of Council that climate change will lead to hotter, longer summers that make air pollution worse by increasing ground-level ozone or smog; and

Whereas, ground-level ozone and smog can worsen respiratory diseases such as asthma or emphysema and increase the risk of heart disease and heart attacks, per the 2018 National Climate Assessment, Chapter 13 (<https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/chapter/13/>); and

Whereas, the American Lung Association State of the Air report has issued failing grades to both Pittsburgh and Philadelphia for their poor air quality; and

Whereas, per [statista.com](https://www.statista.com/statistics/253800/us-states-with-highest-current-asthma-prevalence-among-children/), Pennsylvania's childhood asthma prevalence rate is the ninth highest among the states (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/253800/us-states-with-highest-current-asthma-prevalence-among-children/>); and

Whereas, the methane mitigation industry is a burgeoning industry in Pennsylvania, according to an Environmental Defense Fund report (The Emerging U.S. Methane Mitigation Industry, October 2014), and this industry brings family-sustaining jobs for both entry-level and highly-skilled employees; and

Whereas, it is the judgment of Council that a majority of methane mitigation companies are small businesses with diverse workforces and opportunities for expansion. Cost-effective technologies that exist today we can reduce close to half of emissions at no net cost; and

Whereas, it is further the judgment of Council that cutting methane waste and pollution is good for our environment, our health, and our economy.

The Council of the County of Allegheny therefore hereby moves as follows:

Allegheny County Council hereby encourages the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to finalize a strong methane rule that closes the existing loophole for low-producing wells.

PRIMARY SPONSOR: COUNCIL MEMBER HALLAM


CO-SPONSORS: COUNCIL MEMBERS PRIZIO and BENNETT

Read and approved in Council, this 6th day of July, 2021,

Council Agenda No. 11930-21



Patrick Catena
President of Council

Attest: 
Jared E. Barker, Chief Clerk
Allegheny County Council