

September 14, 2020

ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL FILES LAWSUITS CHALLENGING FEDERAL ROLLBACK OF REGULATIONS THAT LIMIT METHANE EMISSIONS

Chicago — Attorney General Kwame Raoul joined a coalition of 23 states and cities in [filing lawsuits](#) challenging a set of rules that remove limits on emissions of methane, volatile organic compounds, and other hazardous pollutants from new, reconstructed, and modified facilities in the oil and natural gas industry.

Methane is a super-polluting greenhouse gas that is up to 87 times more potent than carbon dioxide in its ability to trap heat over a 20-year timeframe. According to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) own estimates, the rollback of these standards will increase methane emissions by 850,000 tons between 2021 and 2030 – or the equivalent of 19 million metric tons of carbon dioxide – accelerating the impacts of climate change and threatening public health, particularly with respect to children, older adults and those suffering from chronic lung disease and asthma.

"The uncontrolled emission of these pollutants is harmful to the public's health and contributes to climate change," Raoul said. "As we continue to see intensified environmental disasters like droughts, fires, hurricanes and floods across the country, it is more important than ever that the EPA to do its job and enforce common-sense regulations that reduce dangerous emissions."

Oil and natural gas operations – production, processing, transmission, and storage – are the largest single industrial source of methane emissions in the U.S. and the second largest industrial source of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions behind only electric power plants. Based on the EPA's own data, it is estimated that roughly \$1.5 billion worth of natural gas – enough to heat over 5 million homes – leaks or is intentionally released from the oil and gas supply chain each year. In an effort to address these emissions, the EPA finalized the first-ever standards limiting methane emission from new, reconstructed, and modified sources in the oil and natural gas sector in 2016. The EPA estimated that the standards would prevent 510,000 tons of methane emissions and resulted in a net benefit of \$170 million in 2025.

On Aug. 13, 2020, the EPA finalized a set of rules stripping the 2016 standards of their important environmental protections. The rules include technical amendments rolling back leak-detection and monitoring requirements, as well as policy amendments rescinding requirements to regulate methane and removing the transmission and storage category entirely from regulations. Together, these changes are expected to increase emissions of methane by 850,000, volatile organic compounds by 140,000 and other hazardous air pollutants by 5,000 tons by 2030.

In the lawsuits, Raoul and the coalition argue that the EPA's rollback of the standards violates the Clean Air Act because it arbitrarily eliminates pollution controls from the transmission and storage segment of the oil and natural gas sector, and entirely abandons the regulation of methane without any justification.

Joining Raoul in the lawsuits are the attorneys general of California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington, as well as the California Air Resources Board, the city of Chicago, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the city and county of Denver.