

EDWARD J. MARKEY
MASSACHUSETTS

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U.S. SENATE CLIMATE CHANGE TASK FORCE

United States Senate

SUITE SD-255
DIRKSEN BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2107
202-224-2742

975 JFK FEDERAL BUILDING
15 NEW SUDBURY STREET
BOSTON, MA 02203
617-565-8519

222 MILLIKEN BOULEVARD, SUITE 312
FALL RIVER, MA 02721
508-677-0523

1550 MAIN STREET, 4TH FLOOR
SPRINGFIELD, MA 01103
413-785-4610

April 19, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

I write to encourage you to solidify the U.S. position as a global leader in combatting climate change by including a methane emissions reduction target as part of the upcoming nationally determined contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement. I thank you for rejoining the Paris Agreement, organizing the upcoming Leaders Summit on Climate, and for prioritizing the urgent climate crisis in Executive Order 14008. The impending NDC announcement provides a critical opportunity to meet the worsening climate crisis with bold solutions, including through a reduction in methane emissions.

The inclusion of a specific methane emissions reduction target in the broader NDC and the discussion of methane emissions at the Leaders Summit would help address near-term global warming, support global methane reductions, and strengthen our national response to the climate crisis. Methane pollution is a significant and immediate risk to the global climate. It is the primary component of natural gas and is roughly 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide over a 20-year period.¹ Additionally, methane accounts for around one-quarter of global warming, and that share continues to rise due to emissions from fossil fuel and agricultural sources.² Despite the economic downturn from the COVID-19 pandemic, these emission levels surged in 2020, exhibiting the largest annual increase recorded in recent decades.³

¹ Myhre, *et al.*, *Anthropogenic and Natural Radiative Forcing*, Contribution of Working Group I to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2013), https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/WG1AR5_Chapter08_FINAL.pdf (last accessed Apr. 16, 2021).

² Jackson, *et al.*, *Increasing anthropogenic methane emissions arise equally from agricultural and fossil fuel sources*, *Environ. Res. Lett.* (Jul. 2020), published online Jul. 15, 2020, <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/ab9ed2>.

³ Theo Stein, *Despite pandemic shutdowns, carbon dioxide and methane surged in 2020*, NOAA Research News (Apr. 7, 2021), <https://research.noaa.gov/article/ArtMID/587/ArticleID/2742/Despite-pandemic-shutdowns-carbon-dioxide-and-methane-surged-in-2020>.

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A 40-percent reduction in methane emissions by 2030 is already technically feasible through the use of existing technology and regulatory frameworks.⁴ More vigilance from the fossil fuel industry would result in significant methane reductions. Indeed, the use of currently available technology, such as technology to detect and repair methane leaks, could achieve a 75-percent decrease in methane pollution from that sector.⁵ And enforcing rules to reduce methane emissions from the oil and gas industry, issued under existing Clean Air Act authority, could achieve approximately 60 percent of the 2030 reduction goal.⁴

Momentum is building for international action to curb dangerous methane pollution and mitigate the immediate threat of accelerated global warming. Cutting methane emissions globally will avoid nearly 0.3 degrees Celsius of warming by 2040.⁶ If countries include specific methane targets in their NDCs, it will increase our chances of keeping global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius. The United States has an opportunity to cement its position as a global leader through robust methane reduction targets and strategies, and can use that leadership to support other countries in making similar pledges.

At the Leaders Summit on Climate, I encourage you to raise the urgent need to address methane pollution. Thank you for your leadership, and I appreciate your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Edward J. Markey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line drawn across the middle of the name.

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

⁴ Environmental Defense Fund, *Recapturing U.S. Leadership on Climate: Setting an Ambitious and Credible Nationally Determined Contribution* (Mar. 2021), <https://www.edf.org/sites/default/files/documents/Recapturing%20U.S.%20Leadership%20on%20Climate.pdf>.

⁵ International Energy Agency, *Methane Emissions from Oil and Gas* (Jun. 2020), <https://www.iea.org/reports/methane-emissions-from-oil-and-gas>.

⁶ Climate & Clean Air Coalition secretariat, *Methane's links to respiratory diseases strengthens the case for rapid reduction*, Climate & Clean Air Coalition (Mar. 22, 2021), <https://www.ccacoalition.org/en/news/methane's-links-respiratory-diseases-strengthens-case-its-rapid-reduction>.