

Oct. 29, 2024

Dear Senator:

We write to you as organizations representing diverse faith traditions united by our shared commitment to protect our planet, communities, and future generations. We have a special concern for communities that over the years have suffered harms from polluting industries such as fossil fuel extraction and related infrastructure.

While we recognize the imperative to transition to clean energy to address the global climate crisis, this shouldn't come at the cost of the health and livelihoods of these affected communities around the country, which are disproportionately black and brown communities and indigenous first nations.

We therefore feel compelled to express our concerns about the Energy Permitting Reform Act of 2024 (S. 4753), introduced by Senators Manchin and Barrasso. While the bill includes important provisions designed to accelerate clean energy deployment, we can't ignore the communities that are threatened by provisions that limit their ability to challenge proposed projects, require additional oil and gas lease sales, loosen oversight and speed up agency decisions on projects, and shorten deadlines for judicial review.

The provisions on liquified natural gas (LNG) are especially worrisome. Many of us stand in solidarity with communities along the Gulf Coast in supporting the Department of Energy's temporary pause on the approvals of LNG export applications while the agency reviews and updates its process for determining if a project is in the public interest. While the pause was overturned by a federal court, we still believe it's critical for the DOE to re-assess environmental and public health impacts of these projects, with robust community input. This proposed legislation instead weakens the DOE review process, imposing unreasonable 90-day deadlines to issue decisions on LNG export authorizations following the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Such a rushed timeline would likely force the DOE to approve LNG projects without fully assessing their environmental, community and economic impact.

We believe that there are more just ways of transitioning to a renewable energy future. We recommend considering the following bills that better align with the faith community's climate goals and the needs of communities on the front lines of the climate crisis and the harms of polluting industries:

- The Environmental Justice for All Act (HR. 1705/S. 919) addresses the disproportionate impacts of pollution and climate change on low-income communities and communities of color, ensuring they have a voice in environmental decision-making.
- The Clean Electricity and Transmission Acceleration Act of 2023 (HR. 6747) would help build the infrastructure needed to support renewable energy without compromising the concerns of communities that have experienced disproportionate harm from the fossil fuel industry.
- The Clean Energy Minerals Reform Act (HR. 3495/S. 1742) would modernize the 1872 Mining Law to bring much-needed oversight and sustainability to the extraction of minerals essential for clean energy technologies.

As people of faith, we believe in the moral imperative to protect our neighbors, particularly those in communities most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and pollution. We urge you to seek a path forward that respects both our environment and the communities and nations that bear the brunt of environmental harm.

For the sake of our children, grandchildren, and future generations, we ask you to stand with us in working toward a clean, just, and sustainable future for all.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Anabaptist Climate Collaborative
Aytzim: Ecological Judaism
Catholic Climate Covenant
Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes
Dayenu: A Jewish Call to Climate Action
Franciscan Action Network
Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart
Interfaith Power & Light
Laudato Si Movement
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Medical Mission Sisters - Justice Office
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
Mennonite Church USA Climate Justice Ministry
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Western Province Leadership
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
United Church of Christ
United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society
U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph

STATE ORGANIZATIONS

Adrian Dominicans (MI)
Daughters of Wisdom US JPIC office (NY)
Dominican Sisters – Grand Rapids (MI)
Franciscan Peace Center, Clinton, Iowa
Jewish Climate Action Network NYC
Massachusetts Interfaith Power & Light, Inc.
New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light
PA-Jewish Earth Alliance
Pennsylvania Interfaith Power & Light
Servants of Mary, Ladysmith, Wisconsin
Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati

Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston
Texas Impact
The Aquarian Minyan (CA)