

Petition to Governor-Elect Jared Polis

Calling for Meaningful Action to Protect Colorado Communities from Fracking and to Address Climate Change through a Just & Equitable Transition to Renewable Energy

Dear Governor-Elect Polis,

We are writing on behalf of a broad coalition of organizations and with regard to over one million Colorado voters who are demanding greater protection of public health and safety in our state as it relates to oil and gas development. Our elected officials and the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) have thus far failed in their duty to adequately protect the public health and safety of Colorado communities, and we ask you, our new Governor-elect, to take swift measures to address these concerns.

As you are well aware, the past decade has ushered in a fracking boom that has coincided with a population explosion in our state, with many of the wells being drilled ever closer to homes, schools, and vulnerable areas such as drinking water sources. Communities have risen up to protect themselves from the onslaught of fracking by passing locals bans and moratoria, lobbying local officials and the state Legislature, and through hundreds of hours of testimony and thousands of complaints to the COGCC - all to no avail. Fracking is still being permitted within the half-mile distance that numerous public health studies show increases risk of harm, including cancer, respiratory problems, birth defects, low birth weight babies and more, and that firefighters recommend as an evacuation radius from fires and explosions - of which there have been 17 since the deadly Firestone tragedy. Meanwhile, fracking companies in the U.S. are over \$200B in debt and have never made a single year of positive operating cash flow in aggregate, leaving many analysts to predict an industry bust in coming years that will leave our communities saddled with the cleanup of tens of thousands of toxic, leaking, abandoned well sites.

This fall, over one million Colorado voters showed their support for 2500' setbacks from homes, schools, playgrounds, water sources and other vulnerable areas through yes votes on Proposition 112. The measure came within six percentage points of passing despite an unprecedented \$40M opposition campaign from the oil and gas industry and being outspent 40:1. This is a strong message from Coloradans demanding protective action now.

We call on you to take necessary, bold action to protect Colorado communities from irresponsible oil and gas operations and to promote a just, timely transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy. Scientists have stressed the need for swift action, with the International Panel on Climate Change recently warning that global temperature rise must not exceed 1.5C to avoid

catastrophic climate change. The report forecasts that we have just 12 years for an unprecedented reduction in emissions if we're to stay below the 1.5C, and avoid out of control, escalating climate impacts. Coloradans are already experiencing the health and safety risks of climate change through more intense wildfires, droughts, floods, temperature extremes, the pine-beetle epidemic, vector-borne disease, impacts on agriculture, impacts on winter sports, tourism and more.

Oil and gas operations are contributing significantly to climate change through pervasive leaks of the potent greenhouse gas methane, which is 86 times more heat-trapping than carbon dioxide, over a 20 year span. Current methane leakage rates yield no climate benefit of switching from coal to fracked gas. Scientists tell us that the vast majority of fossil fuels must stay in the ground in order to stay below 1.5C. Therefore, part of the COGCC's current mission to "foster" oil and gas development is seriously outdated, dangerous, and must be dropped. To meet our state's health, safety, and climate goals, Colorado must take immediate and meaningful actions to reduce oil and gas development and accelerate transition to a renewable energy future.

In line with the above, we call for your leadership in efforts to:

- **Increase oil and gas operations setbacks to 2500'** - or to a distance that is in line with the growing body of public health studies and firefighters' recommendations to reduce health and safety risks, and give cities and counties the ability to create stronger protections or bans if they wish.
- **Reform the Colorado Oil and Gas Conservation Commission**, including:
 - Work with the Legislature to **revamp the COGCC's mission statement to eliminate "fostering" the oil and gas industry**, which is no longer appropriate in the 21st Century with a climate crisis. This agency's mission must focus on regulating the industry with a primary goal of protecting public health, safety and environmental quality including a livable climate. Also, loophole language for "variances" to rules and regulations in COGCC Rule 502b(1) must also be eliminated.
 - **Appoint new Commissioners** who will focus on this updated mission.
 - Work with Colorado's new Attorney General Phil Weiser and the COGCC to **drop the appeal of Martinez decision and enforce it by prioritizing protection of public health, safety and the environment as a precondition to permitting oil and gas development**.
 - Create an oversight committee to **periodically review and evaluate the performance of the COGCC** to ensure that it is adequately meeting its mission.
 - **Suspend further oil and gas permitting** until the above is achieved.
- **Promote a just, timely transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy** in line with the recent IPCC report that says that global temperature rise must be kept below 1.5C to

avoid the most dire climate impacts. Achieving that goal without relying on unproven carbon capture and storage technologies will require net neutral greenhouse gas emissions by 2035 or sooner.

We appreciate your previous action to protect communities from fracking and address climate change, including your goal of 100% renewable energy by 2040. You can build upon the leadership and innovation now happening in a growing number Colorado communities that are committed to a rapid transition to renewable energy. We ask for a swift response to this urgent call for bold, responsible leadership for Colorado.

Signed,

[*Please add your name by signing here.*](#)