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PRESS STATEMENT

White House Oil and Gas Report Sees the Trees but Misses the Forest

The report outlines fiscal reforms to the federal oil and gas leasing program but falls far short of a comprehensive review

Washington, D.C.— On Friday, the Biden Administration issued its report on the federal oil and gas leasing program, highlighting the program’s well-established need for reforms. The report pointed to numerous GAO and OIG investigations that identified the program’s failures to provide fair returns to taxpayers, ensure wells are cleaned up in a timely manner by operators, and balance development with other critical uses such as wildlife habitat, ranching, recreation and wilderness. However, the report fails to commit to a comprehensive overhaul of the program and inadequately addresses the program’s immense contributions to climate change, and severe impacts on public health and quality of life for local communities, including disproportionate impacts faced by Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities and split estate landowners who own private land above federal minerals.

Congress is currently considering a number of the important fiscal reforms recommended by DOI in the Build Back Better Act that would institute several common-sense budgetary reforms highlighted by Friday’s report.

Barbara Vasquez, a leader with the Western Organization of Resource Councils, from Cowdrey, Colorado reacted to the report with the following statement:

“The Biden Administration’s commitment to advancing reforms to ensure that extraction of our publicly owned oil and gas serves the interest of the people, not corporate CEOs, is long overdue. Ensuring oil companies pay their fair share for public resources and have the money reserved to cover the full cost of cleaning up after themselves is critical to protecting nearby residents, taxpayers, and the environment.”

“The reforms outlined in the interim report are a band-aid on a deeply flawed system. As climate change ravages the West, Interior must consider the cumulative impacts, including global climate change, of any further leasing and development decisions.

Unchecked development threatens our drinking water, the land around us, the wildlife that also relies on it, and our health. We demand a fundamental change to the processes for planning, leasing and managing development of oil and gas on public lands, not only fiscal reform.”

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The [Western Organization of Resource Councils \(WORC\)](#) is a network of grassroots organizations that span seven of the Western states with more than 18,000 members. Headquartered in Billings, Montana, WORC also has offices in Colorado and Washington, D.C.