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The Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining held an oversight hearing on the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) proposed rule to reduce venting, flaring, and leaks during oil and gas production on Federal and Indian lands.

Although proponents and opponents of the rule agree that the unnecessary venting and flaring of natural gas is harmful to the environment and reduces revenue to taxpayers, states, tribes, and the federal government, they do not agree on how to regulate reduction.

Subcommittee Chairman John Barrasso (R-WY) and others who opposed to the rule decried its effectiveness and highlighted BLM's lack of authority in regulating methane emissions. They argued that because the Environmental Protection Agency already regulates methane emissions that BLM should not. Opponents also questioned the role of the federal government in reducing methane leaks. For example, Colorado, North Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming already have regulations in place for venting and flaring, which many Republican members of the subcommittee believed to be sufficient.

Conversely, Amanda Leiter, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management at the Department of the Interior, defended the BLM rule. She argued that BLM has the authority to regulate venting and flaring of methane on Federal and Indian lands due to its obligation to reduce natural resource waste.

Sources: Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Public Lands, Forests, and Mining; E&E News; The Federal Register; The Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
