

September 22, 2022

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Schumer,

We write as U.S. scientists, physicians, and nurses deeply alarmed by the intensifying global climate crisis and its accelerating harm to our nation and to the world. As clear evidence shows us, greenhouse gas emissions have soared to their highest levels in history and continue to rise—with [carbon dioxide](#) spiking another 6 percent in the last year alone and energy-related [methane emissions](#) up by another 5 percent.

The result is extreme heat, catastrophic flooding, widespread drought, rising seas, collapsing ice shelves, and failing crops. As our own data show us, critical planetary ecosystems are at risk of breaking beyond repair. Commenting on these [trends](#), compiled in a report last year by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, UN Secretary General António Guterres, issued a “code red for humanity.”

In this context, we *implore* you to reject all attempts by Senator Manchin and his allies to advance legislation, in a so-called side deal, that would actually fast-track more fossil fuel projects.

The scientific consensus is now crystal clear: the scale and tempo of climate mitigation necessary to avoid wholesale calamity requires ending the expansion of fossil fuel production, swiftly ramping up renewable energy, and rapidly phasing out the use of fossil fuels entirely. In sum, we need to leave oil, gas, and coal in the ground and turn off the spigot of carbon pouring into the air in the form of both carbon dioxide and methane.

Advancing legislation that in any way facilitates additional fossil fuel extraction—or incentivizes infrastructure projects that further entrench our dependency on oil, gas, and coal—takes us in exactly the opposite direction.

The Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP), a project favored by Senator Manchin, would alone add to the atmosphere each year an additional 89 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions—the [equivalent](#) of 26 coal plants. New fossil fuel infrastructure projects, including MVP, are flatly incompatible with limiting warming to 1.5° C, the threshold stipulated by the Paris Agreement. Again, in the words of the United Nations Secretary General, “investing in new fossil fuels infrastructure is moral and economic madness.”

These fossil fuel projects also carry enormous risks to public health that include not only diverse widespread [health impacts](#) from an overheated climate but also direct harm to those living near them.

As is now documented in more than [100 studies](#), public health harms linked to living near oil and gas wells and associated infrastructure include [asthma](#), [heart problems](#), [early death](#), and impairments to [infant health](#). A large study published just last month found that living near fracking wells tripled the risk of [leukemia](#) for Pennsylvania children. More than [17.6 million](#) U.S. residents live within a mile of an active oil or gas well. These Americans include our patients.

And the accelerating climate crisis is creating a water crisis as rising seas, prolonged drought, and historic storms push our under-resourced drinking water systems past their breaking point. [Wildfires in California](#) contaminated drinking water sources with toxic chemicals, including cancer-causing benzene. In [Jackson, Mississippi](#), a month of extreme rainfall overwhelmed the city's aging water treatment plant, leaving residents this summer with neither safe, drinkable water nor even the ability to flush toilets or effectively fight fires.

Fossil fuels are also the number one cause of air pollution. Each year, fossil fuel-derived air pollution kills [8.7 million people](#) around the world and contributes to a multitude of health problems, including cardiovascular and respiratory conditions. These injuries are [not borne equally by all](#). In the United States, Black, Indigenous, Hispanic, rural and low-income white communities bear the brunt of exposure to air pollutants created by fossil fuels.

We cannot sit by idly and watch our government advance policies that will quite literally fan the flames of the climate crisis, which is already threatening humanity. You both have spoken eloquently about climate change and the need for bold action. We have heard you affirm the necessity of science for policymaking and the importance of listening to scientists for guidance. We are those scientists. And we are the doctors and nurses who take care of those harmed by this unfolding crisis. Speaking together, we urge you in the strongest possible terms to reject this attempt to force through legislation that weakens our bedrock environmental laws and fast-tracks ill-conceived fossil fuel ventures.

You have the power to untether this wrongheaded legislation from the Continuing Resolution and prevent it from moving forward. Please find the courage.

Scientists and health professionals joining this letter do so in their individual capacities and not on behalf of the institutions with which they are affiliated.

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RN-Retired Neonatal

Tierra Curry, MS
Senior Scientist Center for Biological
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Timothy Fagan, MD
Retired Physician

Tina Weishaus, MSN
Certified Nurse Specialist, Mental Health

Todd Brusko, PhD
Professor

Tom Kimmerer, PhD
Consulting Forest Scientist

Tucker Richards, BSN
Nurse

Tyler Anthony, PhD
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Ulrike Seibt, PhD
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Usha Reddi, MD
Physician

Vanna Haniff, BSN
RN-RestorixHealth at The Brooklyn Hospital
Center

Virginia Mary Rosen, BSN
Holistic Nurse for the Environment (Pro
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Walter de caro, PhD
President Cnai italian nurses association

Wendy Dwyer, BSN
Retired RN, BSN

Wendy Heiger-Bernays, PhD
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William Daniell, MD
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William J Ripple, PhD
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Zoe Leach, BSN
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