



**To:** Interested Parties

**From:** Andrew Baumann, Global Strategy Group

**Date:** July 21, 2023

**Re:** NEW POLL: Texas voters support stronger limits on oil and gas methane emissions, including eliminating emissions from routine flaring, would reward supportive elected officials at the ballot box

A new survey of registered voters in Texas, conducted by Global Strategy Group, finds that voters support the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) placing significant stronger limits on methane emissions from the oil and gas industry – including regular inspections of leaks at oil and gas wells and monitoring of large emissions events known as “super-emitters.” They also agree that the EPA should go further and strengthen this proposal to eliminate emissions from routine flaring at oil wells. And while Democrats start out at a disadvantage on the generic ballot for Congress, this issue galvanizes voters and brings supportive Democratic Congressional candidates in a dead heat with Republicans who oppose these efforts.

Large majorities of Texas voters recognize climate change as a problem, are looking to the U.S. government to take strong action to combat it, and support stricter regulations to do so. Moreover, they see methane pollution as a driver of harm to air quality and the climate. So, it’s not surprising that these voters believe the proposal to place stronger limits on methane emissions will have a positive impact on air quality, health, *and* even the economy.

Importantly, support for these methane standards holds up after a balanced debate that includes attacks on the proposal taken directly from the oil and gas industry’s playbook. And supportive Democrats continue to receive a political lift after that back-and-forth.

## Key Findings

**Texans want to see lawmakers take stronger action to limit pollution, including from the oil and gas industry.** Nearly three-quarters of Texas voters (72% support/27% oppose) believe the EPA should “update standards with stricter limits on air pollution.” This belief is driven by the fact that voters hold very pro-climate attitudes from the start. Almost two-thirds think that climate change is a major problem facing our nation and that the U.S. government should do more to combat climate change. A similar number say that we need stricter regulations to reduce air pollution from the oil and gas industry. And almost seven-in-ten believe that methane emissions are harming both our air quality and our climate.

ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT STATEMENTS								
	% Agree	% Disagree	Overall	Swing*	NET Agree			
					Dem	Ind	GOP	
Methane emissions from the oil and gas industry are harming our <u>air quality</u> .	69	31	+38	+61	+90	+43	-6	
Methane emissions from the oil and gas industry are harming our <u>climate</u> .	68	32	+36	+51	+98	+66	-24	
We need stricter regulations to reduce air pollution from the oil and gas industry.	66	34	+32	+50	+92	+49	-22	
The U.S. government <u>should do more</u> to combat climate change.	65	35	+30	+38	+94	+42	-26	
The U.S. government <u>should take strong action</u> to combat climate change.	65	35	+30	+57	+94	+29	-22	
Climate change is a major problem facing our nation.	64	36	+28	+46	+94	+48	-30	

**So, it's no surprise that overwhelming majorities support the EPA adopting stronger limits on methane emissions that include regular inspections of wells, monitoring of super emitters, and tougher equipment standards.** Two-thirds of Texas voters back strong limits on methane, including 38% who say they strongly support these standards. Independents and white voters (both blue collar and college educated) join Democrats and voters of color in their support.

**SUPPORT FOR STRONGER EPA METHANE LIMITS**

*The Environmental Protection Agency is considering a proposal to place stronger limits on methane emissions from the oil and gas industry, including regular inspections of leaks at all oil and gas wells, tougher equipment standards, and monitoring of large emissions events known as "super-emitters."*

*Just based on what you know, do you support or oppose the EPA adopting these stronger limits on methane emissions from the oil and gas industry?*

	Overall	Swing	Dem	Ind	GOP	Hispanic	Black	White Non-col.	Col.
% Support	66	73	94	68	44	74	81	60	56
% Oppose	28	19	1	25	60	21	11	34	40
NET Support	+38	+54	+93	+43	-6	+ 53	+ 70	+26	+16

**Texas voters want the EPA to take this proposal one step further and eliminate emissions from routine oil well flaring.** A strong majority of Texans are on board with strengthening the EPA's proposal as opposed to allowing exceptions for routine flaring. Once again, independents and voters of color show strong support.

**AGREEMENT WITH ELIMINATING ROUTINE FLARING**

*As you may or may not know, routine flaring is the practice of burning off natural gas or methane at oil wells, which releases methane, carbon dioxide, and other emissions. The EPA's current proposal has exceptions that allow routine flaring, but some people have proposed that the EPA should strengthen its proposal to eliminate emissions from routine flaring.*

*Knowing this, do agree or disagree with the following statement?*

**The EPA should strengthen its proposal to eliminate emissions from routine flaring at oil wells.**

	Overall	Swing	Dem	Ind	GOP	Hispanic	Black	White Non-col.	Col.
% Agree	58	59	88	55	34	66	76	52	47
% Disagree	33	24	5	21	59	27	11	37	48
NET Agree	+25	+35	+83	+34	-25	+ 39	+ 65	+15	-1

**Texas voters see tougher methane limits as having a positive impact on air quality, health, and the economy.** An overwhelming majority of voters recognize that stronger methane limits will positively affect the quality of air they breathe, the health and future generations of their families, and climate change -- alongside waste from the oil and gas industry. They even recognize that these stronger methane limits will help secure American energy independence.

Moreover, when we match a statement arguing that we need stronger safeguards to protect health, air, and climate against one arguing that "burdensome regulations" will "drive up energy prices and kill jobs," the former is the clear winner among Texans. Similarly, when we match up a statement arguing that stronger safeguards will create jobs by encouraging innovation with one arguing that it will destroy jobs by increasing costs, the former also wins.

## IMPACT OF STRONGER EPA METHANE LIMITS

NET Positive (% Positive - % Negative)					
	Overall	Swing	Dem	Ind	GOP
The quality of air we breathe	+52	+56	+86	+47	+26
The health of families like yours	+46	+46	+81	+37	+20
Climate change	+46	+49	+81	+42	+18
Reducing waste from the oil & gas industry	+43	+49	+74	+45	+17
Future generations of your family	+36	+34	+79	+29	+2
American energy independence	+8	+11	+44	+10	-22

## METHANE SAFEGUARDS ECONOMIC IMPACT

Which statement is closer to your view, even if neither is exactly right?					
	Overall	Swing	Dem	Ind	GOP
We need stronger safeguards against methane pollution because it will mean <u>cleaner air, healthier families, and slowing down the rate of climate change.</u>	60	62	93	59	33
We can't afford more burdensome regulations on methane emissions because they will <u>drive up energy prices and kill jobs.</u>	39	38	5	39	67
NET Safeguards	+21	+24	+88	+20	-34
Strengthening safeguards against methane pollution will <u>create more jobs by encouraging innovation and investments in technologies</u> like methane capture.	58	62	88	60	32
Creating more burdensome regulations on methane emissions will <u>destroy more jobs by increasing costs and making American oil and gas companies less competitive.</u>	42	37	11	40	67
NET Safeguards	+16	+25	+77	+20	-35

**Support for stronger methane standards (and agreement with eliminating routine flaring) remains robust after a balanced debate.** A back-and-forth between supporters of stronger methane limits and opponents of such action does not undo the widespread support from voters across Texas. Once voters hear from both sides,<sup>1</sup> three-in-five continue to support stronger limits, regardless of region, race, or educational background. A similar number agree that the EPA should eliminate routine flaring. Political swing voters show overwhelming support for these policies.

## DEBATE AROUND STRONGER EPA METHANE LIMITS

	Overall	Swing	Dem	Ind	GOP	Hispanic	Black	White Non-col.	Col.
<b>Stronger Methane Limits</b>									
% Support	61	65	93	68	33	65	86	56	52
% Oppose	39	35	7	31	67	35	14	44	48
NET Support	+22	+30	+86	+37	-34	+30	+72	+12	+4
<b>Eliminating Routine Flaring</b>									
% Agree	62	66	95	67	33	69	84	55	51
% Disagree	37	33	5	32	65	31	16	43	48
NET Agree	+25	+33	+90	+35	-32	+38	+68	+12	+3

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix for text of debate.

**Supporting stronger methane restrictions puts elected officials in a stronger political position.**

While Democrats start off trailing Republicans by eight points on the generic Congressional ballot, when we reframe the ballot to pit a Democrat who supports stronger methane limits against a Republican who opposes them, the supportive Democrat benefits, pulling into a tie at 45% -- a net 8-point lift. When voters consider stronger methane standards, Democrats make especially large gains with center-right voters.

## IMPACT OF SUPPORTING METHANE RESTRICTIONS ON VOTE FOR CONGRESS - POST-DEBATE

*If the general election for U.S. Congress were held today, would you vote for a Democrat who supports stronger limits on methane emissions, including tougher standards on routine flaring at oil wells, or a Republican who opposes stronger limits on methane emissions, including tougher standards on routine flaring at oil wells?*

	Overall	Dem	Ind	GOP	Hispanic	Black	White Non-col.	Col.
% Democrat who supports	45	91	38	9	49	73	36	37
% Republican who opposes	45	4	32	82	38	16	56	54
NET Democrat	0	+87	+6	-73	+11	+57	-20	-17
NET Straight Generic	-8	+94	-4	-92	+3	+54	-28	-22
<b>Total Lift</b>	<b>+8</b>	<b>-7</b>	<b>+10</b>	<b>+19</b>	<b>+8</b>	<b>+3</b>	<b>+8</b>	<b>+5</b>

### ABOUT THIS POLL

Global Strategy Group conducted a survey of 600 registered voters in Texas, between July 5 and 11, 2023, and included bilingual interviewing (in English and Spanish). The sample has a margin of error of +/- 4.0%. Of the 600 interviews, half were conducted by telephone or a text invitation to participate in an online survey; the other half were conducted via web-based panel with participants matched to the voter file. Care has been taken to ensure the geographic, political, and demographic divisions of the population of registered voters are properly represented.

\*"Swing" voters are defined as those who do NOT fit either of the following categories:

- Voted for Biden in 2020 AND vote for the generic Democrat in each of the three times asked in this survey.
- Voted for Trump in 2020 AND vote for the generic Republican in each of the three times asked in this survey.

## Appendix: Simulated Debate

**[SPLIT – READ TO HALF OF THE SAMPLE] *Supporters*** say that stronger regulations are needed because methane pollution is 80 times more potent than carbon pollution when it comes to disrupting our climate. Toxic air pollution released with methane is linked to cancer and respiratory diseases like childhood asthma. What's more, methane leaks cause billions of dollars' worth of natural gas to be wasted every year. There are proven, cost effective fixes that would eliminate up to 60% of this waste and pollution while creating tens of thousands of good-paying jobs in the growing methane mitigation industry. Some of the top oil and gas producing states have already adopted these policies, and they've cut pollution and created jobs without increasing costs for consumers.

**[SPLIT – READ TO THE OTHER HALF OF THE SAMPLE] *Supporters*** say that stronger regulations are needed because methane pollution is 80 times more potent than carbon pollution when it comes to disrupting our climate. Toxic air pollution released with methane is linked to cancer and respiratory diseases like childhood asthma. What's more, methane leaks cause billions of dollars' worth of natural gas to be wasted every year. There are proven, cost effective fixes that would eliminate up to 60% of this waste and pollution while creating tens of thousands of good-paying jobs in the growing methane mitigation industry. The Big Oil CEOs who have been raking in record profits can afford to implement these fixes, reduce this waste and pollution, and protect the health of our families.

**[READ TO THE FULL SAMPLE] *Opponents*** say that American natural gas is good for our economy and our environment. It is a cheap and plentiful resource that burns clean, powering America's clean energy future. These burdensome and unnecessary regulations on the natural gas industry will kill tens of thousands of jobs and make America more reliant on foreign energy. They will raise energy prices for small businesses, forcing some to shut down or cut jobs, and will lead to more jobs being shipped overseas. What's more, these one-size-fits-all regulations from Washington will drive up energy prices for American families and businesses, leading to higher prices on groceries, gas, and electricity when Americans are already struggling to keep up with the rising cost of living.