

To Speaker Johnson, Minority Leader Jeffries, and members of the House of Representatives:

We write to you as elected leaders across the state of Colorado to urge you to oppose passage of H.R. 6009, the Restoring American Energy Dominance Act, offered by Rep. Lauren Boebert (R-CO). If passed, this harmful legislation would halt the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Fluid Mineral Leases and Leasing Process Rule ("oil and gas leasing rule"), and would prevent the BLM from offering a substantially similar rule in the future. The bill passed committee on December 6 and is expected to pass the House quickly when taken to the floor this session.

The existing federal onshore oil and gas system prioritizes leasing and production on public lands over all other important uses—shortchanging Coloradans, locking up thousands of acres that could be put to better and higher uses, and leaving Coloradans on the hook to pay for the cost of cleaning up orphaned and abandoned wells.

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) were big steps in the right direction for Colorado and addressed many of these shortcomings. The IRA included long-overdue reforms to the oil and gas leasing program on federal public lands — it raised the royalty rate for production on these lands, aligned other fees to account for decades of inflation, and cut down on speculation by requiring oil and gas companies to pay a nominal fee to nominate public lands for leasing. It also included Senator Hickenlooper's [COMPETES Act](#) (S. 2962, 117th Congress) to end noncompetitive leasing — the process by which companies can buy up leases for bargain basement prices if no other bids are made at auction. According to [one analysis](#), had these reforms been enacted 10 years ago, taxpayers would have received \$541 million more in royalty revenue and \$25 million more in rents, half of which would have gone back to Colorado.

The BIL, for its part, included billions of dollars in funding that benefit many facets of Colorado's economy and infrastructure. Notably, it included \$4.7 billion for mitigating and reclaiming orphaned oil and gas wells, reflecting provisions in Senator Michael Bennet's [Oil and Gas Bonding Reform and Orphaned Well Remediation Act](#) (S. 2177, 117th Congress). Colorado can expect to receive roughly [\\$79 million](#) to plug orphaned and abandoned wells on state lands — in addition to the BLM's efforts and funding to mitigate wells on federal lands in our state.

The BLM's proposed oil and gas leasing rule, released in July, is a critical next step in these efforts — both by ensuring these reforms are reflected in regulations and in addressing other shortcomings in the status quo that the IRA and the BIL did not cover.

Importantly, the proposed rule reforms the oil and gas bonding process by raising minimum bonding requirements. Oil and gas bonds are meant to hold companies accountable for mitigating and cleaning up their wells after they cease to produce. The rates, however, remain at levels set over a half-century ago — without any inflationary adjustments. As a result, these rates — at \$10,000 per lease, \$25,000 for all wells in a state, and \$500,000 for all wells nationwide — resemble a pittance: [Taxpayers for Common Sense](#) estimates \$371 million in potential reclamation liability for currently producible wells on federal lands in Colorado. And when companies abandon their wells, or go bankrupt, the bond the government is left with fails to cover the cost of cleanup, and taxpayers must cover the cost of cleaning up the industry's mess. The proposed rule would raise these rates to \$150,000 per lease, \$500,000 statewide, and eliminate nationwide bonding, which would better reflect the true cost of mitigation and aligns with the bonding rates put forward by Senator Bennet in his bill, S. 2177. These stricter bonding requirements are widely supported by Coloradans — [92% of voters](#) support requiring oil and gas companies, rather than taxpayers, to pay for all clean-up and restoration costs after drilling occurs. As Jackson County, CO, resident Barbara Vasquez recently testified before your committee, the oil and gas leasing rule is a "common sense and long overdue set of updates that will help ensure that all operators provide a sufficient backstop to ensure funds are available for complete and timely reclamation. This puts the costs of cleanup where they belong, not on taxpayers and communities."

The proposed rule would also deprioritize [speculative oil and gas leasing](#) — that is, leasing lands with little to no oil or gas development potential. When leased by oil and gas companies, regardless of development, that lease is tied up for 10 years, preventing access to recreation and other uses, let alone the revenue that could be generated from those uses. One example of the benefits of minimizing speculative leasing is in North Park, Colorado. There are currently [more than 29,000 acres](#) of oil and gas leases in North Park on lands that have little chance of actually recovering any oil or gas, including 15,000 acres that have been auctioned off over the past decade alone. The hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, and wildlife watching in North Park is some of the best in Colorado and helps fuel a robust outdoor recreation economy for local communities. In fact, hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation account for almost [half of Jackson County's](#)

[economic activity](#). Limiting the practice of speculative leasing will help expand opportunities for conservation and recreation for all who enjoy this wildlife mecca.

This, combined with the end of non-competitive leasing that Senator Hickenlooper championed, will ensure that more federal public lands in Colorado can be managed for recreation, hunting, fishing, skiing, and responsible renewable energy production.

In addition to these other economic and [health benefits](#), the BLM has [analyzed the economic impact](#) of the proposed rule, the results of which are far more favorable than continuing without reform.

Representative Boebert's legislation would withdraw this rule, wrecking these critical efforts and complicating the implementation of these enacted reforms. And it precludes the BLM from putting forward a similar rule in the future, hamstringing the federal government's ability to manage Colorado's federal public lands for anything aside from oil and gas extraction.

Most importantly, however, it disregards the views of tens of thousands of Coloradans — our constituents. During the rule's comment period, the agency received over 260,000 comments. According to [one analysis](#), over 99% of these comments were supportive and only roughly 0.1% asked the agency to weaken or withdraw the rule. Tens of thousands of these comments came from Colorado voters. This bill completely disregards those voices — *our* voices.

For these reasons, we urge you to oppose H.R. 6009 when it comes before the full House of Representatives for a vote.

Sincerely,

1. Colorado State Senator Chris Hansen
2. Colorado State Senator Lisa Cutter
3. Colorado State Senator Jessie Danielson
4. Colorado State Senator Nick Hinrichsen
5. Colorado State Senator Chris Kolker
6. Colorado State Senator Sonya Jaquez Lewis
7. Colorado State Senator Kevin Priola
8. Colorado State Senator Dylan Roberts
9. Speaker of the Colorado House of Representatives Julie McCluskie
10. Colorado State Representative Judy Amabile
11. Colorado State Representative Andrew Boesenecker
12. Colorado State Representative Kyle Brown
13. Colorado State Representative Regina English
14. Colorado State Representative Meg Froelich
15. Colorado State Representative Tim Hernández
16. Colorado State Representative Leslie Herod
17. Colorado State Representative Cathy Kipp
18. Colorado State Representative William Linsdtedt
19. Colorado State Representative Meghan Lukens
20. Colorado State Representative Javier Mabrey
21. Colorado State Representative Karen McCormick
22. Colorado State Representative Jennifer Parenti
23. Colorado State Representative Manny Rutinel
24. Colorado State Representative Emily Sirota
25. Colorado State Representative Marc Snyder
26. Colorado State Representative Tammy Story
27. Colorado State Representative Brianna Titone
28. Colorado State Representative Elizabeth Velasco
29. Colorado State Representative Stephanie Vigil
30. Colorado State Representative Mike Weissman
31. Colorado State Representative Stephen Woodrow
32. Town of Basalt Council Member Elyse Hottel
33. Boulder County Commissioner Claire Levy

34. Boulder County Commissioner Ashley Stolzmann
35. Town of Breckenridge Mayor Pro Tem Kelly Owen
36. Town of Breckenridge Council Member Jeffrey Bergeron
37. Town of Breckenridge Council Member Dick Carleton
38. Town of Breckenridge Council Member Carol Saade
39. Town of Breckenridge Council Member Jay Beckerman
40. Town of Breckenridge Council Member Todd Rankin
41. Town of Carbondale Mayor Ben Bohmfalk
42. Town of Carbondale Town Trustee Colin Laird
43. Chaffee County County Commissioner Keith Baker
44. Chaffee County Commissioner PT Wood
45. City of Durango Mayor Melissa Youssef
46. Eagle County Commissioner Kathy Chandler-Henry
47. Eagle County Commissioner Jeanne McQueeney
48. Eagle County Commissioner Matt Scherr
49. Town of Frisco Council Member Lisa Holenko
50. Town of Eagle Council Member Geoff Grimmer
51. Town of Frisco Council Member Jessica Burley
52. City of Glenwood Springs Council Member Sumner Schachter
53. City of Grand Junction Mayor Pro Tem Abe Herman
54. Gunnison County Commissioner Jonathan Houck
55. Gunnison County Commissioner Laura Puckett Daniels
56. City of Gunnison Mayor Diego Plata
57. City of Gunnison Council Member Jim Gelwicks
58. City of Gunnison Council Member Boe Freeburn
59. La Plata County Commissioner Marsha Porter-Norton
60. La Plata County Commissioner Matt Salka
61. Town of Nederland Mayor Billy Giblin
62. Town of Nederland Mayor ProTem Tom Mahowald
63. Town of Ophir Mayor Andrew Ward
64. Town of Paonia Mayor Pro-Tem Dave Knutson
65. Pitkin County County Commissioner Francie Jacober
66. Pitkin County County Commissioner Steve Child
67. Pitkin County Commissioner Greg Poschman
68. Town of Ridgway Mayor John I. Clark
69. Town of Ridgway Council Member Polly Kroger
70. Town of Ridgway Council Member Terence Schuyler
71. Routt County Commissioner Timothy V. Corrigan
72. Town of Silverton Mayor Shane Fuhrman
73. Town of Snowmass Village Mayor Bill Madsen
74. Town of Telluride Mayor Teddy Errico
75. Town of Telluride Mayor Pro Tem J. Meehan Fee
76. Town of Telluride Council Person Elena Levin
77. Town of Telluride Council Member Geneva Shaunette
78. Town of Telluride Council Member Dan Enright
79. Town of Telluride Council Member Ashley Von Sprecken
80. San Miguel County Commissioner Lance Waring
81. San Miguel County Commissioner Anne Brown
82. San Miguel County Commissioner Kris Holstrom
83. Summit County Commissioner Nina Waters
84. Summit County Commissioner Eric Mamula
85. Town of Vail Mayor Travis Coggin
86. Town of Vail Council Member Pete Seibert
87. Town of Vail Council Member Jonathan Staufer