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The Mountain Pact Applauds the Introduction of Sen. Bennet’s Bonding and Public Participation Bills, Says the Legislation Will Make Way for a Better Federal Oil & Gas Leasing System

Durango, Colorado - Earlier today, Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO) introduced two bills to tackle the growing “orphaned” oil and gas well crisis. The [Oil and Gas Bonding Reform and Orphaned Well Remediation Act](#) would strengthen [bonding requirements](#) and provide states and the Bureau of Land Management with funding to reclaim orphaned wells. The [Public Engagement Opportunity on Public Lands Exploration \(PEOPLE\) Act](#) addresses the [need to include robust public participation and Tribal consultation](#) when decisions are being made about whether federal public lands should be leased for drilling.

According to the [Interstate Oil & Gas Compact Commission](#), in the United States, there are nearly 57,000 documented and as many as 746,000 undocumented orphaned wells. Clean-up of these wells could cost taxpayers millions and have major public health and environmental impacts.

In reaction to the bills’ introduction, Anna Peterson, Executive Director of [The Mountain Pact](#), issued the following statement:

“The same oil and gas CEOs who are responsible for [the majority of the one-quarter of the United States’ greenhouse gas emissions coming from the development of fossil fuels on public lands](#) have also orphaned oil and gas wells on our public lands for decades. In turn, their negligence has left taxpayers on the hook to clean up the mess and deal with the environmental impacts.

“That’s why The Mountain Pact applauds Senator Bennet for his bills, which will ensure taxpayers aren’t left to clean up the oil industry’s mess. These bills will help modernize the federal oil and gas leasing system while protecting local communities and our cherished public lands. Congress must act to update decades-old bonding rates and codify opportunities for the public to have a say in how our public lands should be managed.

“Local governments across the West recognize that climate change is negatively impacting our communities and urgent bold action is needed to address the climate crisis. We applaud these efforts by Senator Bennet and call on his colleagues to support them.”

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