

New Mexico educators to N.M. Oil & Gas Association: Stop using us in pro-industry campaigns

Written by Staff Reports and New Mexico educators listed below
Friday, 10 December 2021 06:59

More than 200 educators from across New Mexico sent a letter to members of the state legislature and the U. S. Congress on Nov. 30 asking that the New Mexico Oil & Gas Association stop using educators and students in public campaigns to promote more oil and gas development, block efforts to diversify state revenues, address climate change and make changes to the federal oil and gas program.

The letter follows an early effort in July 2021, when organizations representing thousands of teachers and educators across New Mexico sent a letter to Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham and state legislative leaders expressing concern about the state's over-reliance on fossil fuel extraction for education funding.

The letter follows.

November 30, 2021

Leland Gould

President & CEO

New Mexico Oil & Gas Association

P.O. Box 1864

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Santa Fe, NM 87504

Dear Mr. Gould,

We, the undersigned individual educators (including early childhood, K-12 and higher education, in all job categories), are writing to request that the oil and gas industry and its allies immediately stop using New Mexico teachers and kids as excuses for more oil and gas development. As educators, we have dedicated our lives to our students. We are deeply concerned about the impacts of climate change like extreme drought, wildfires, and air pollution, and what that will mean for future generations. It has been extremely disappointing to watch the oil and gas industry and its allies use educators and students as props in campaigns against progress on climate and clean energy policies, particularly President Joe Biden and Interior Secretary Deb Haaland's efforts to pause new oil and gas leasing and make changes to the federal oil and gas leasing program.

The industry and allies have used the same misleading tactics to block legislation to diversify state revenues. Recent campaigns have sought to scare the public and educators alike about the impacts of those policies using industry-funded, discredited and inaccurate data. Using images of students in schools gives the impression that New Mexico educators support the industry's one-sided position, which is disingenuous and misleading to the public.

An analysis from the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee shows that New Mexico has not seen virtually any of the impacts from the leasing pause that industry predicted. With royalties and production of oil and gas in New Mexico at record levels, we believe now is the perfect time to begin moving away from oil and gas.

We appreciate the funding generated for our state's education system from every source, including from oil and gas. But relying so heavily on one industry, has unfortunately had negative consequences for students, as school funding has risen and fallen along with the industry's fortunes. Whether our students receive services they need should never depend on

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the price of a commodity. For education to succeed, we need our elected leaders to diversify our revenue sources, so that teacher salaries and classroom resources are not taken for a ride every time there is a boom and eventual bust cycle in the oil and gas industry.

We firmly believe our state, our country, and all nations must transition as quickly as possible away from fossil fuels. Science shows that immediate cuts must be made to our carbon emissions, which means we must transition rapidly to clean energy alternatives and use less oil and gas. We wholeheartedly support this transition.

New Mexico children deserve an education system from early childhood through higher education funded by stable and consistent sources of revenue which do not also contribute to endangering their future on this planet and our own Land of Enchantment.

We continue to urge our elected leaders to move as quickly as possible to make significant changes to our energy and revenue systems. At the same time, we strongly urge the oil and gas industry and its allies to stop standing in the way of aggressive action to address climate change and to stop pretending educators and students are solely on your side.

Respectfully,

Christopher Adams

Theresa Adams

Leah Ahkee-Bacziewicz

Margaret Alire

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Tonia Caselman

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David Greenberg

Richard Griego

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