

ADVOCACY

Oil industry launches campaign against Biden's leasing plan

Timothy Cama, E&E News reporter • Published: Tuesday, February 23, 2021



An oil and gas rig overlooking Wyoming's Wind River Range. Larry Zuckerman/BLM Wyoming

The oil and natural gas industry is running a new advertising campaign to fight President Biden's halt to leasing for drilling on federal land.

The Western Energy Alliance said it's spending several thousand dollars on its new radio campaign in New Mexico, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, North Dakota and other states where it expects the leasing ban to hit hardest.

The ad cites research published last year from the Wyoming state government that forecasts the loss of 57,800 jobs each year. The ban also threatens affordable gasoline and funding for public schools, police and firefighters, WEA said.

"Oil and natural gas produced in our state makes these essentials possible," the ad says. "But an executive order by President Biden that bans leasing on public lands risks it all, including as many as 58,000. It's more politics, while real Americans suffer. We need your help to reverse this decision."

The industry group, which mainly represents producers in the West that often operate on federal land, is also fighting the policy in federal court, having sued the Biden administration over it on the day the president took office.

"President Biden has decided to sacrifice the livelihoods of tens of thousands of hard-working westerners to appease environmental activists in his party," Kathleen Sgamma, WEA's president, said in a statement.

Sgamma connected Biden's goals to the massive energy supply problems during Texas' recent cold snap, when numerous electricity-generating sources including renewables and fossil fuels went offline, leaving residents to freeze.

"The folly of their ultimate agenda to stop all American oil and natural gas production has been on full display in Texas," she said. "People are seriously harmed when they don't have access to reliable, affordable energy that keeps them warm in the winter with the electricity running. By disadvantaging western production, he's adding further instability to the energy sources all Americans rely on."

The study that predicted 57,800 lost jobs was funded by the Wyoming Energy Authority, which promotes fossil fuel development in the state. The Western Energy Alliance also helped fund publicity and outreach for the research, *Politico* reported.

Biden issued executive orders last month enacting the moratorium on leasing as part of a series of actions on climate change ([Greenwire](#), Jan. 27).