

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts:

Geoff Nolan

LULAC

770-545-9881 cell

gnolan@lulac.org

Stuart C. Ross

Clean Air Task Force

914-649-5037 cell

sross@catf.us

Elena Rios, MD, MPH

NHMA

202-628-5895 office

nhma@nhmamd.org

Alan Septoff

Earthworks

202-271-2355 cell

aseptoff@earthworksaction.org

**LATINO COMMUNITIES, PARTICULARLY IN US SOUTHWEST, AT GREATER RISK
OF CANCER AND RESPIRATORY DISEASES FROM AIR POLLUTANTS
FROM OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY, REPORT FINDS**

#

**HIGH POVERTY LEVELS AND LOW RATES OF HEALTH INSURANCE AMONG
LATINOS EXACERBATE HEALTH IMPACTS FROM AIR TOXICS, OZONE SMOG,
AND OTHER DANGEROUS POLLUTANTS FROM THE OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY**

#

**REPORT AND INTERACTIVE MAP HELP PEOPLE AT METRO AREA, COUNTY
AND STATE LEVELS LOCATE AND UNDERSTAND THEIR HEALTH RISKS**

WASHINGTON, September 28, 2016 – Clean Air Task Force (CATF), League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA), and Earthworks today released a [report](#) and interactive [map](#) that demonstrate, for the first time, the specific risks to Latino communities of diseases from airborne pollutants from oil and gas development. The release was concurrent with a BloombergGov symposium in Washington entitled: *On the Front Lines: The Impact of Climate Change on Latino Communities*, to mark Hispanic Heritage Month.

Among the key findings of the report, entitled “*Latino Communities at Risk: The Impact of Air Pollution from the Oil and Gas Industry*,” are:

- The Latino population is burdened by over 150,000 asthma attacks and more than 110,000 lost school days each year are due to increases in ozone smog during the summer ozone season resulting from oil and gas pollution.
- Nearly 1.78 million Latinos live in counties with cancer risk above EPA’s one-in-a-million level of concern due to toxic emissions from oil and gas operations.
- More than 1.8 million Latinos live within a half-mile of existing oil and gas facilities and the number is growing every year. Peer-reviewed science

shows that living near oil and gas facilities is associated with negative health impacts, including fetal defects and respiratory ailments.

- Many Latinos are further burdened with health impacts from this air pollution due to high levels of poverty and relatively low rates of health insurance coverage.

“With millions of Latinos facing threats to their health as a result of living in close proximity to environmental hazards, it is important that action be taken to ensure the best health outcomes for Latinos,” said LULAC National Executive Director Brent Wilkes. “By pinpointing the location of these environmentally at-risk communities, we can adequately prioritize policies that will address the health issues facing the Latino community.”

Lesley Fleischman, lead author of the report and a Technical Analyst for CATF, said: “What we found in the report is that, as a US population segment, Latinos are particularly threatened by airborne pollutants emitted by sources in the oil and gas industry. This is true for both communities living next door to oil and gas operations, and for communities hundreds of miles away, because these pollutants can travel great distances. We need to address the sources of this pollution now, for the sake of all Americans threatened by these health risks.”

The Oil and Gas Threat Map, developed by Earthworks and FracTracker Alliance, displays information about the threats faced by people living across the nation from pollution from the oil and gas industry. The map shows the locations of the 1.2 million oil and gas facilities operating around the country, as well as the populations, schools, and hospitals within a half-mile radius of those facilities. In addition to data on asthma attacks and other health impacts associated with ozone smog-forming pollution emitted by oil and gas operations, the threat map displays data about the populations living within a half-mile “threat zone” radius from oil and gas development, where residents have a cause for concern about potential health impacts, and the counties with cancer and respiratory health risk above EPA’s level of concern.

“Good information enables good decisions,” said Earthworks’ spokesman Alan Septoff. “Now that we know millions of Latinos’ health are harmed by oil and gas air pollution, we need the Environmental Protection Agency to make the good decision to enact strong rules to cut oil and gas methane emissions to protect Latinos and all Americans.”

The Latino population living in areas with cancer risk above EPA’s level of concern is highest for populations in Texas, Oklahoma and Colorado. Some of the largest Latino populations at risk for childhood asthma attacks due to ozone smog resulting from oil and gas facilities are Los Angeles, several cities in Texas, Denver, and Albuquerque. However, since pollutants can drift for hundreds or even thousands of miles before forming ozone smog, Latino communities as far as Chicago, Washington, DC, and New York City each face thousands of childhood asthma

attacks each year due to oil and gas pollution. In addition, the report found that three states – Texas, California and Kansas – have the largest share of Latino citizens living within the half-mile “threat zone.”

"Latino families are disproportionately suffering the effects of air pollution from gas and oil production. Our children are suffering from more asthma attacks than non-Latino white children," said Dr. Elena Rios, President and CEO of the National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA). "Latino adults are experiencing higher rates of cancer and respiratory issues, like asthma attacks, partially as a result of this pollution. These harmful trends need to stop. We can't have a healthy nation if the Latino community is lagging behind due to these types of environmental injustices."

Dr. Rios was a featured speaker at today's BloombergGov symposium, bringing together policymakers, Latino leaders and health experts for a discussion on the impact of climate change on Latino communities, and how climate issues may factor into Hispanic Americans' voting decisions during the upcoming elections.

To clean up these dangerous pollutants, EPA has begun the process under the Clean Air Act to address methane pollution from oil and gas development. In June 2016, EPA finalized strong standards for methane and ozone smog-forming volatile organic compounds pollutants covering new and modified oil and gas facilities, which have the additional benefit of cleaning up other pollutants including air toxics like benzene and formaldehyde. However, EPA has only just begun the process of addressing the 1.2 million existing sources of methane and other airborne pollutants, which are currently spewing out millions of tons of pollutants without any controls.

"Latino communities face significant risk of harm from oil and gas industry air pollution", said Conrad Schneider, CATF Advocacy Director. "We need the next Administration to issue comprehensive nationwide standards to protect these communities from the harmful air pollution from oil and gas facilities."

For a link to CATF's report "Latino Communities at Risk," please click on www.catf.us/resources/publications/view/230. To access the Earthworks map, please visit www.oilandgasthreatmap.com.

#

Clean Air Task Force is a nonprofit environmental organization with offices across the U.S. and in China. CATF works to help safeguard against the worst impacts of climate change by catalyzing the rapid global development and deployment of low carbon energy and other climate-protecting technologies through research and analysis, public advocacy leadership, and partnership with the private sector. For more information, please visit www.catf.us.

Earthworks is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting communities and the environment from the adverse impacts of mineral and energy development while promoting sustainable solutions. Earthworks exposes the negative health, environmental, economic, social and cultural impacts of mining and energy extraction through work informed by sound science. For more information, visit earthworksaction.org

The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) is the nation's largest and oldest civil rights volunteer-based organization that empowers Hispanic Americans and builds strong Latino communities. Headquartered in Washington, DC, with 1,000 councils around the United States and Puerto Rico, LULAC's programs, services and advocacy address the most important issues for Latinos, meeting critical needs of today and the future. For more information, visit www.LULAC.org.

NHMA is a non-profit organization that seeks to empower Hispanic physicians to lead efforts that improve the health and wellness of Hispanic and other underserved groups. NHMA is a membership organization that represents the interests of more than 50,000 licensed physicians, providing leadership and advocacy for its members and partners across the country. For more information, please visit NHMAmd.org