

January 8, 2028

The Honorable Jared Polis
Governor of Colorado

The Honorable Janice Rich
United States Senate

The Honorable Matthew Soper
US House of Representatives

The Honorable James Coleman
President, Colorado Senate

The Honorable Cody Kennedy
Mayor, City of Grand Junction, Colorado

As a county commissioner representing a Western Slope community, I feel a responsibility to speak up when statewide policies risk overlooking the realities faced by rural Colorado. Colorado's move away from natural gas is one of those moments.

Natural gas remains essential to our energy system. It heats homes, powers businesses, and supports grid reliability during peak demand and extreme weather. While the state's long-term goal of reducing emissions is understandable, the current pace and structure of this transition raise serious concerns for counties like mine.

In Mesa County and across western Colorado, electrification is not a simple switch. Our winters are cold, our communities are spread out, and much of our housing stock is older. Replacing natural gas systems often requires major electrical upgrades, driving up costs for homeowners, renters, and small businesses. These costs may be manageable in some urban areas, but they place a heavy burden on rural residents who already face higher energy and housing expenses.

Infrastructure is another challenge. Many parts of the Western Slope lack the electric capacity needed to support full electrification at scale. Until those systems are upgraded, discouraging natural gas without reliable alternatives risks higher rates and reduced reliability. As local officials, we hear directly from residents when utility bills spike or service becomes unreliable.

There are also economic implications that deserve honest discussion. Natural gas development supports jobs and generates tax revenue that fund schools, roads, public safety, and essential county services. Moving away from this resource without a clear and realistic replacement plan puts those revenues, and the communities that rely on them, at risk.

Local governments are not opposed to progress. We support innovation, cleaner technologies, and

responsible environmental stewardship. What we are asking for is flexibility. Energy policy should recognize regional differences and allow communities to transition at a pace aligned with infrastructure, affordability, and local conditions.

State leaders often speak about equity. True equity means ensuring that rural and mountain communities are not disproportionately impacted by policies designed with urban assumptions in mind. A balanced energy strategy that includes renewables, efficiency improvements, and responsible use of natural gas during the transition would better serve the entire state.

Colorado can move toward a cleaner future without creating unnecessary strain for working families and local governments. That requires listening to local voices and crafting policies that work not just in theory, but in practice.

As a county commissioner, my goal is simple: to protect the reliability, affordability, and economic stability of the community I serve. I hope the state will slow down, engage with local leaders, and take a more practical approach as we chart Colorado's energy future.

Sincerely,

JJ Fletcher
Mesa County Commissioner
Palisade, Colorado