

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

COMMITTEE ON  
FOREIGN RELATIONS

COMMITTEE ON  
THE BUDGET

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4607

October 29, 2015

RECEIVED

NOV - 5 2015

COURT REPORTERS  
OFFICE

Mr. Stephen Carter  
Nelson County  
PO Box 336  
Lovingson, VA 22949-0336

Dear Mr. Carter:

Thank you for contacting me about the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline through Virginia. I appreciate hearing from you.

Several proposals have arisen in the past year to build natural gas pipelines in Virginia, including the Mountain Valley Pipeline by NextEra and EQT Energy, the Atlantic Coast Pipeline by Dominion, and the Appalachian Connector by Williams Companies. I have heard from many Virginians with concerns about these projects.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is charged with deciding whether natural gas pipeline projects are in the public interest. The process by which FERC decides on a project can be lengthy and complex. Our country relies on affordable heat and electricity for modern life and to power our economy, a reality that often requires updates to pipeline and transmission infrastructure to ensure that energy is available when we need it. While environmental impacts are unavoidable in some cases, there are some environmental impacts that are unacceptable. FERC has the challenge of deciding whether projects strike this careful balance of priorities.

I'd like to address two areas about which I've heard concerns pertaining to natural gas pipeline projects-the broad issue of our natural gas policy as a nation and the specific issue of impacts these pipelines might have on Virginia landowners and natural resources.

On the first issue, I believe the boom in U.S. natural gas has allowed us to expand jobs in our domestic energy sector, lower energy costs for domestic manufacturing, displace heavier-polluting sources like coal, and reduce the world's reliance on gas from adversarial regimes, such as Russia and Iran. I certainly acknowledge concerns that have been raised about potential impacts of natural gas production on drinking water quality, on sensitive natural resources, and on net greenhouse gas emissions should methane leak from gas wells. We should always follow the science on these issues and should take appropriate action, if warranted, to protect public health and the environment. With wise public policy and careful attention to safety, I believe we can maximize the benefits that domestic gas production has afforded us, while minimizing the risks.

On the second issue, I believe any company wishing to build a pipeline or transmission line must, at every step of the process, be open and forthcoming with communities along proposed routes, as well as responsive to concerns that landowners and other residents may express. Communities must have their questions answered quickly and substantively, and companies should provide fair compensation for any land acquisition and work to make sure projects are as minimally disruptive as possible. I expect all companies wishing to build energy infrastructure in Virginia to honor commitments to be transparent, and my office is available to work with constituents if they are encountering difficulty in having their questions answered.

In August 2015, I sent a 5-page letter to FERC to voice numerous concerns I heard in meetings with Virginians along the Atlantic Coast Pipeline's corridor. These concerns revolved around a number of substantive issues related to the pipeline-what its impact would be on natural resources like rivers and groundwater, how it would impact local property values, and to what extent communities would have opportunity to benefit from this new supply of natural gas. I also heard a concerning number of reports that the public outreach process was insufficient-public meetings were "packed" with advocates of one point of view, public testimony was erroneously transcribed, and project applicants in many cases did not provide timely or substantive responses to public questions. I felt it was important to bring these and other issues to the FERC's attention through my letter.

Please be assured that I will continue to monitor this process and facilitate communication between interested parties-including state officials-and the federal government. Again, thank you for contacting me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'TK / L', positioned above the printed name 'Tim Kaine'.

Tim Kaine