

VOICES
Victory Over InFRACKstructure, Clean Energy inStead

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

December 15, 2020

Contacts:

Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper, 215-801-3043

Karen Feridun, Berks Gas Truth, 610-678-7726

**Over 80 Groups call on Congress to Demand Needed Reforms
to FERC and the Natural Gas Act**

Washington, D.C. - 81 organizations from across the nation have called upon Congress to undertake meaningful legislative reforms to prevent the ongoing abuses of power and law by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) when it comes to their rubberstamp approval of fracked gas pipeline projects. The organizations are all part of the VOICES (Victory Over InFRACKstructure, Clean Energy inStead) coalition and have been calling upon Congress for over 6 years to investigate FERC and put into place needed Natural Gas Act reforms.

The letter reads:

“We are once again calling on Congress to champion meaningful legislative reforms that will prevent ongoing and future abuses of power and law by FERC. As it currently stands, the language of the Natural Gas Act (NGA) is being misused by FERC to deny people their legal and constitutional rights, to strip and undermine the legal authority of states... and to inflict harms on our communities’ health, safety and environments, all for the benefit of a single industry and private energy companies seeking to maximize their own corporate profits and greed.”

The letter **follows up a September 2020 virtual People’s Hearing organized by VOICES** (you can view the full hearing [here](#) or view video clip shorts [here](#)) during which impacted communities from across the nation testified to FERC’s extensive history of bias and abuse against the environment and the people in its approval of pipelines and fracked gas infrastructure. Witnesses shared stories about their personal experiences, documenting the many instances in which FERC has skirted critical regulations and laws and ignored requests for transparency. **Maryland Congressman Jamie Raskin joined the hearing** and spoke about the preliminary findings of an investigation by the Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties showing that the natural gas pipeline approval process used by FERC unjustly tramples on the rights of private landowners.

You can read the letter sent to Congress [here](#).

“With this letter we are again telling Congress it’s time to act. As our letter makes clear, FERC is misusing its authority to disenfranchise the public, undermine the rights of states, inflict irreparable harm on our environment, exacerbate the climate crisis, ignore conflicts of interest that compromise the approval process, and trample on the rights of people and property owners, all in an obvious effort to advance fracked gas pipelines with as few impediments as possible. While we were pleased that Congress itself held hearings regarding FERC’s process and abuses over the course of 2020 (the most recent held this past month), it is now time for Congress to act and advance needed legislative reforms that will change FERC’s culture of abuse. Our letter lays out the clear path of needed reforms Congress needs to undertake in order to restore law, order, and justice to the pipeline review process,” said **Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper, leader of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, and a leading member of the VOICES coalition, a**

national coalition opposing the advancement of FERC approved infrastructure and calling for Congressional hearings and FERC reform.

"The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has demonstrated over and over that it will always put the interests of the pipeline industry it's supposed to regulate over those of the people it's supposed to serve. So who will regulate the regulators? The answer is Congress. Today, we are calling on them once again to end FERC abuses through reforms of the Commission and the Natural Gas Act that enables it," said **Karen Feridun, Founder, Berks Gas Truth.**

"The citizens of Oberlin, Ohio voted to ban pipelines through their City, but nevertheless FERC licensed the NEXUS pipeline developers to exercise eminent domain on City land so they could export gas to Canada. The City's appeal is now in Federal Appeals Court. FERC needs to stop allowing eminent domain for export pipelines," said **John Elder, Vice President, Communities for Safe and Sustainable Energy.**

"The transgressions of FERC are many. One of the most damaging and confusing is its use of tolling orders, which grant approval prematurely, short-circuiting due process. This must end!" said **Louis A. Zeller, Executive Director, Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League.**

"We are running out of time, pretending there is no harm or that we can keep going as we have been is so foolish. Health is based on a stable climate and we will tip over the edge without changes now, not later," said **B. Arrindell, Director of Damascus Citizens for Sustainability.**

"Senator Roth said, 'A sweetheart relationship between those who regulate and those who are regulated will strain the credibility of the most trusting citizens.' That strain has come to fruition and it is time for critical reform. To meet the health needs of all living things, we need a holistic concept of energy. FERC's mission needs to reflect the times in which we live, especially to adhere to the goals needed to mitigate the looming and present threats of climate change," said **Tammy Murphy, Advocacy Director, Physicians for Social Responsibility - Pennsylvania.**

"On behalf of the property owners that I represented in Northeastern, Ohio on the Nexus Pipeline, I would encourage Congress to make immediate reforms to stop the abuses in eminent domain proceedings particularly as to the misuse of Rule 65 in the FRCP to force affirmative injunctions against property owners long before the administrative process is complete and has not been heard before the Court of Appeals on the Request for Rehearing; outlaw tolling orders; stop pipeline personnel from threatening, meeting and intimidating property owners to compel settlements (this occurred even when legal counsel was representing property owners); fund appropriate offices to provide permanent representation before FERC; stop the revolving door at FERC; stop funding FERC via applicants; stop the ridiculous dog and pony shows by FERC used to intimidate and mislead property owners as to the dangers of pipelines; pass meaningful safety regulations that create realistic setbacks away from schools, homes and dense population areas away from blast zones (reform PHMSA) similar to DOD guidelines for munitions; restore jury trials for takings; outlaw the use of precedents by a government agency to support its own opinions to justify agency action," said **David Mucklow, Attorney for the Coalition to Reroute Nexus, Ohio.**

"Water is the sustainer of all life and creation. Local and global water resources are inextricably linked together throughout all time. Humans are at a point of moral reckoning: is it fair to knowingly curse future generations to drought and water wars? Renewable energy infrastructure makes up for the fresh water that fossil fuels deplete at the expense of economically and racially charged *sacrifice* zones. The fresh water remaining on earth is limited and dwindling. What would it be like if we planned with global youth in mind?" said **Blair Nelsen, Executive Director of WATERSPIRIT.**

###