



Dear Governor McAuliffe...

September 19, 2016

From:
Virginia Community leaders

To:
Governor Terry McAuliffe
Executive Mansion, Commonwealth of Virginia
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor McAuliffe,

We are Virginians of multiple races, ages and backgrounds representing every region of the Commonwealth. We are writing you today to share our belief that clean energy – with your support – can soon fully power our lives and our economy without poisoning our air or our water or sacrificing entire regions of our state.

But currently, Governor, your energy policies *are* sacrificing whole communities. Your support of the dirty-energy projects of Dominion Power and other polluting companies is harming us – the signers of this letter – in clear and concrete ways. We just wanted to write you directly to put real human faces behind the growing public concerns over your policies.

In April, several leading organizations issued a report card grade of D+ to your administration on the issues of climate change and energy. In June, more than 60 groups from across the state issued an open letter to you asking you to put the welfare of Virginia's people ahead of the interests of polluters. In

July, 600 of us visited your home to reiterate our concerns as part of the July 23 “March on the Mansion.”

But Governor you have not responded to any of these concerns. You have not announced any change in your energy policies. So we call on you once again to reverse course immediately on supporting fracked-gas pipelines and the improper burial of coal ash waste in our communities. We want to ask you instead to begin fully embracing a just energy policy for all Virginians that reduces total climate pollution while investing in clean-energy jobs and real investments to protect our people and the military from accelerating sea-level rise and other impacts of global warming.

Who are we? We are a northern Virginia resident whose drinking water has already been contaminated next to a Dominion Power coal ash storage site. We are a Buckingham County minister whose congregations reside in the harm radius of a proposed 57,000 horsepower compressor station for a fracked-gas pipeline you support. We are a Nelson County landowner whose heritage includes indigenous American descent and whose hay fields and cattle could be negatively affected by direct erosion from the Atlantic Coast Pipeline for fracked gas. And we are a Korean War veteran and landowner whose very property will be seized and whose fields and forests will be disrupted by a second massive fracked-gas pipeline – the Mountain Valley Pipeline – that you support.

We are a student whose entire future depends on rapid cuts to greenhouse gases to combat global warming. We are a senior citizen in Hampton Roads who is fearful of being stranded in the growing coastal floods linked to climate change and who must now pay for flood insurance for a house that was never previously vulnerable to floods.

We know, Governor, that you can lead us toward a better energy future by embracing better policies. We are grateful that you have taken small steps to promote solar power, wind, and energy efficiency. We know that clean-energy prices continue to fall rapidly worldwide and that virtually every state in America uses more wind and solar power than Virginia and has better energy-efficiency standards.

But proportionally, your current policies overwhelmingly embrace fossil fuel development over clean energy use. The expanded emissions from new gas pipelines would by themselves totally counteract all you have done to combat climate change through renewable energy. Your support of the Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley Pipelines for fracked gas would seize a 1000-mile strip of public and private land, threaten drinking water, incentivize fracking, and rapidly increase global warming pollution. Indeed, a recent study shows these pipelines, if built, will trigger total greenhouse gas emissions equal to twice the volume of all of Virginia’s current power plants *combined*. Finally, your support of Dominion Power’s policy of dumping coal ash liquid into rivers and burying coal-ash solid waste in unlined soils is a profound threat to human health and the environment.

We ask you to join us – immediately – in changing course on the policies we’ve identified here. **Will you please meet with us at your earliest convenience to discuss these vital issues?**

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



George Jones, 86, landowner, Giles County, Virginia – George served in the US Navy from 1950-54, serving in the Korean War. The land of his 10-generation Virginia family would be seized, bisected, and substantially deforested by the proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline carrying fracked gas from West Virginia into Virginia. George is devastated by this invasion of his homeland and the violation of his citizen's rights but equally concerned with the certain destruction to the ecosystem and especially ancient water systems that can never be "fixed." The Mountain Valley Pipeline is supported by Governor McAuliffe.



Pastor Paul Wilson, 63, ordained minister, Buckingham County, Virginia –

Pastor Paul ministers to the Union Hill and Union Grove Baptist Churches in Buckingham County. His rural congregations would be dramatically affected by the pollution, noise, and maintenance activity of a proposed 57,000-horsepower compressor station that would process fracked gas from the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline running from West Virginia to Virginia. The ACP pipeline and the compressor station are both supported by Governor McAuliffe.



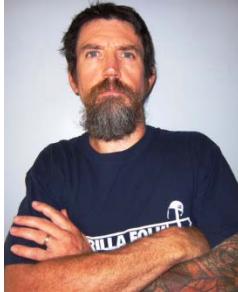
Caroline Bray, 20, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia – Caroline

was born and raised in Virginia and is currently studying biology at the University of Virginia, where she is the president of the Climate Action Society. Through her advocacy against new pipelines in Virginia and campaign for fossil fuel divestment, she has become increasingly concerned with the influence of Dominion Power and other fossil fuels companies on her state government and her school.



Dan Marrow, 60, homeowner, Possum Point Road, Dumfries, Virginia – Dan

and his wife and two daughters live within a thousand feet of a coal ash waste pond operated by Dominion Power. His teenage daughters were raised entirely on the property. Recently, the family's drinking water well showed elevated quantities of several toxic heavy metals associated with coal ash. Dominion refuses to remove the nearby coal ash to a modern landfill as North Carolina and South Carolina are requiring of utilities. Governor McAuliffe supports Dominion's coal ash plans that are deemed unsafe in the Carolinas and Georgia.



Russell Chisholm, 48, landowner, Newport, Virginia – Russell is a US Army veteran who served in Desert Storm with the 24th Infantry Division. His home in Giles County, Virginia is walking distance from the Appalachian Trail and just a few miles from the proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline for fracked gas. Russell and his wife, Anna, also an Army veteran, draw their drinking water from a spring that, because of the special “karst” geological features of this part of Appalachia, could be disrupted or drained completely by the sort of trenching and pipe-laying required by the Mountain Valley Pipeline. Again, Governor McAuliffe supports the MVP.



Janice Johnson, 77, retired city employee of Hampton, Virginia, who now lives in Newport News, Virginia – Janice, a native of the Hampton Roads region, lives in daily fear that increased flooding and extreme weather events will leave her and other vulnerable seniors stranded in the event of a major storm. Worse, because of sea-level rise, she’s now being asked to pay for expensive flood insurance for a home that had never before been in a designated flood zone, and she is required to pay for a costly surveyor to come on her land to authenticate the height of her home. Governor McAuliffe has declined to support the Virginia Coastal Protection Act, which would provide the first dedicated state funding to address many of the

region’s flooding issues.



Wisteria Johnson, 66, landowner, Shipman, Virginia. Biographical statement from Wisteria: “We are seven-generation mountain folk of indigenous American, European and African dissent. We currently live peaceably in conjunction with untouched headwaters and untouched nature typical to this part of Virginia. We have timberlands and hay fields and we are growers of a small herd of beef cattle for public consumption. We are also families who, despite our attempt to remain isolated from American corporate exploitation, we now find ourselves to be

probable recipients to a gas-filled pipeline that would either parallel the headwater beds or lie in the belly of the mountain ridge. The ridge, being its natural self, has steep slopes and God-grown forest. Lastly, we are a family facing endangerment while political and corporate defenders thrive.”



Lee Williams, 51, critical care nurse, Richmond, Virginia. Lee is the mother of three and avid outdoors enthusiast, living near the James River. She has also been a property owner in Nelson County for 18 years, and has raised her children at Wintergreen on the Appalachian Trail and surrounding National Forests. Lee is fighting to ban hydro-fracking and the building of new infrastructure to transport it, because the best scientific evidence points to climate change, resulting sea level rise and super storms, poisoned water, a sickened population, and a devastated landscape. As an active member of St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church and The Interfaith Climate Justice Team, she is called to safeguard life and respect creation by urging decision makers to recognize and honor indigenous communities, other people of color, and our most vulnerable communities throughout the commonwealth that are most at risk of losing access to clean water; whether from contamination from coal ash, construction sediment, spilled oil, or rising sea levels. Lee steadfastly fights for racial justice and reconciliation with climate justice and caring for God’s creation as a matter of stewardship.