

June 8, 2017

From:

Religious Leaders and other People of Faith

To:

Governor Terry McAuliffe;
Hampton Roads Caucus of the VA General Assembly

Re:

Protecting Creation: Faith leaders for a sustainable environment and climate

Dear Governor McAuliffe & Members of the Hampton Roads Caucus of the General Assembly,

Just over two years ago, the Pope released his encyclical letter entitled “Laudato Si” to the world. The title, translating to “Praise be to you, my Lord,” encompasses the overarching connections of all faiths. No matter our discipline, we want to praise our creator and respect the beautiful gifts that make up the nature around us.

As the leaders of local parishes, mosques, churches, temples, and worship centers, we all dedicate our time (and our lives in some cases) to a higher power. That decision requires us to respect the word, respect the creator, and respect creation.

Now we are banding together to make true our divine promise to respect the creations. We must show our respect by defending the beautifully crafted mountains of Virginia. We must convey our veneration by protecting water systems from Bath County to the Chesapeake. We must illustrate our compassion by standing up for vulnerable communities that have been ignored for far too long. In short, we must respect the creation by stopping the Atlantic Coast Pipeline and the Mountain Valley Pipeline.

Together, these two 42-inch diameter pipelines would lay nearly 1,000 miles of new pipe throughout the Commonwealth -- threatening hundreds of waterways and putting the health of some of our most vulnerable communities at risk. The ACP’s main compressor station in Virginia, for instance, would be placed right in the center of a historically low-income African American community. Compressor stations have been linked to a number of devastating health impacts -- with high amounts of methane and toxins such as ethylbenzene, benzene, and formaldehyde. The US Department of Health and Human Services found that exposure to chemicals produced at similar compressor stations in Pennsylvania caused an increase in mortality, respiratory problems, hospitalizations, pre-term births, and low birth weight.¹

We are joining together as people of faith to stand up against these pipelines because we cannot allow a creation as amazing as our earth to be devastated by irresponsible and unnecessary fossil fuel infrastructure any longer. We believe in loving and honoring our neighbors, not in pushing corporate gain through

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https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HAC/pha/BrooklynTownship/BrooklynTwnsp_pm2-5_HC_Final_04-22-2016_508.pdf

eminent domain. These pipeline-related attacks on the health and human rights of the people who live in their paths are contrary to the teachings of all of our religions.

We are not naive in our quest to protect the environment that we love so deeply. We understand that energy is required to power many of the blessings of modern technology. However, there is a proven demand and pathway for that energy to be generated from clean sources that are endowed to us by our creator: wind and solar. We also understand and accept that dirty fuels are exacerbating the well-known issue of coastal flooding in our community through sea level rise.

Most importantly, we recognize the duty that we all have as people of faith to be stewards of our environment for the next generation of humankind that will inherit this Commonwealth and this planet.

Sincerely,

Kathy Early, Holy Spirit Catholic Church
Reverend Rachel Gilmore, The Gathering United Methodist
Debra Grant, Interfaith Alliance at the Beach
Nancy Hess, Church of the Ascension Virginia Beach
Jim Kerr, St. Pauls
Imam Rachid Khouid, Crescent Community Center
Sister Grace Malonzo, St. Pauls
Ed Marroni, Holy Family
Sister Margaret McCabe, St. Nicholas
Reverend John Myers, Virginia Council of Churches
Jim Parke, Church of the Holy Apostles
Dr. Sharon Riley, Faith Deliverance Christian Center
Teresa Stanley, Church of the Holy Apostles
Douglas Throp, Unitarian Church of Norfolk
Anita Unger, Holy Trinity Catholic Church
Reverend Diane Veazey, Lynnhaven Colony UCC
Reverend Ken Veazey, Lynnhaven Colony UCC
Neil Walsh, Sacred Heart
Mallory Washington, Spring Branch Community Church
Ofelia Wattle, Basilica of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception
Carolyn Caywood
Chantal Dejou
Karen Forget
Pastor Kim Hodges
Kelly Jackson
Mary Ann Latona Nadler
Natallia Reid
Mike Stark
Brother Charles Warthen