



May 25, 2017

From:
Veteran Service Corps

To:
Governor Terry McAuliffe

Cc:
Lieutenant Governor Ralph Northam
Virginia Senator Frank Wagner
Ed Gillespie
Tom Perriello
Corey Stewart

Dear Governor McAuliffe,

In 2016, the standoff between nonviolent indigenous water protectors and a militarized police force over the pending Dakota Access Pipeline sent a bolt of lightning throughout the nation, inspiring U.S. citizens of all stripes to come together in support of clean water and indigenous rights.

As Veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States, we took the solemn oath to protect and serve the values of liberty and justice laid out in our nation's founding documents. Many of us left our families and homes to fight for the freedom of all Americans, but returned to the United States only to find that those very principles we travelled abroad to protect were not being honored within our own borders.

Now we are banding together once again to stand up for the freedom of all Americans. However, this time we are protecting ourselves from a new threat: unrestricted corporate excess. Right here in Virginia, there is no better example of this than two proposed fracked-gas pipelines: the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) and the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP).

Together, these two 42-inch diameter pipelines would lay nearly 1,000 miles of new pipeline throughout the Commonwealth -- threatening hundreds of waterways and putting the health of some of our most vulnerable communities at risk. The ACP's only compressor station in Virginia, for instance, is 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 U.S. 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.

We stand together to support our citizens and our Constitution. We stand against these pipelines because we stand against the seizure of private property for corporate gain. Both of these proposed pipelines would create new sacrifice zones and abuse eminent domain to strip property owners of land that, in many cases, has been in their families for generations. This direct attack on the constitutional rights of landowners goes against the oath we all took when we volunteered to serve this great country.

Though there is no proven need for these pipelines, their construction ensures that Virginia remains shackled to fossil fuel extraction for another generation. This is unacceptable at a time when rising seas continue to threaten Virginia's vulnerable coastal community, which is home to the largest naval base in

the world. However, there is a proven demand for a future that is powered by clean energy and innovation. We stand together to ensure a better Commonwealth for the next generation of Virginians who are entrusting our leaders to be stewards of the environment.

These pipelines are not in the best interest of the people and we will not allow Dominion and the fossil fuel industry to put citizens in danger for the sake of their pocketbooks. Thousands of military veterans showed up to Standing Rock, propelled by a duty to defend the freedoms that we stood for as service men and women abroad. Veterans physically put their bodies on the line to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with peaceful water protectors that were attacked by water cannons, dogs, and tear gas canisters deployed by law enforcement. The spirit of solidarity fostered at Standing Rock represents some of the very best of America's ongoing quest to authentically embody the principles that enshrine our most solemn founding documents. We will continue to embody that spirit to protect our communities against the Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley Pipelines.

We are defenders of the American way. We will protect the Commonwealth from radical and unnecessary fracked-gas pipelines. We are Veteran Service Corps.

Sincerely,

Christopher Duesing, President, Veteran Service Corps - Captain, US Army/US Army National Guard

James Barton, U.S. Army

Dave Belote, Colonel, U.S. Air Force

Vincent Cason, Petty Officer 3rd Class, U.S. Coast Guard

Russell Chisholm, U.S. Army

David Copper, Specialist Force Class, U.S. Army

Daniel Fargason, Sergeant, U.S. Army

Adam Fischbach, Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class, U.S. Navy

James Hemingway, U.S. Army

William Hobson, Sergeant, U.S. Army

Glenn Loveless, Petty Officer 2nd Class, U.S. Navy

Shawn Matthews, E5 Nuclear Electronics Technician, U.S. Navy

Charlotte Rea, Colonel, U.S. Air Force

Ian Reilly, Corporal, U.S. Marine Corps