



ABRA Update #132 – June 1, 2017

New Report Pulls Back the Curtain on Dominion

The tactics used by Dominion Energy to obtain support for and ultimate approval of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) are detailed in a new report released June 1 by the Public Accountability Initiative (PIA). [The Power Behind the Pipelines: Atlantic Coast Pipeline](#), the third in a series of reports the organization has produced on controversial pipeline projects in the United States, examines corporate influence, political donations, revolving door lobbyists, regulatory conflicts and the banks behind the ACP.

Among the report's key findings are:

- Vast corporate power behind the pipeline. Dominion Energy, the biggest stakeholder in the ACP, is a huge economic and political powerhouse in Virginia and beyond. The company and its powerful CEO have used their deep pockets and political ties to advance their interests generally and around the pipeline.
- An army of revolving door lobbyists. Dominion and its surrogates have deployed a band of private lobbyists who have backgrounds in government – including a former EPA official from the Obama administration.
- Pro-pipeline politicians cash in. State politicians in Virginia and North Carolina who have been publicly vocal about their support for the pipeline have been some of the biggest recipients of donations from its corporate backers.
- Conflicts of interests at regulatory agencies. Key members of regulatory boards tasked with approving the pipeline in Virginia have backgrounds that raise conflict of interest concerns. For example, the Virginia DEQ's Water Permitting Division Director was once a lawyer for Dominion, according to minutes from a county board meeting.
- Banks invested in the pipeline. Nearly three dozen banks have credit agreements for almost \$15 billion in total to Dominion and Duke. Many of these banks are also funding the controversial Dakota Access Pipeline

The PIA is a New York-based non-profit, public interest research organization that investigates power and corruption in business and government.

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Virginia DEQ Reveals Initial Plans for Water Quality Hearings

The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality has informally announced that 5 public hearings will be held in August to receive public input on the state's consideration of applications for water quality certification under Section 401 of the federal Clean Water Act for the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) and the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP).

According to sources, three hearings will be held for the ACP and two for the MVP, as follows:

ACP

- August 7, Harrisonburg, VA - James Madison University, Festival Conference & Student Center (Grand Ballroom), 6-10 pm
- August 10, Farmville, VA - Longwood University, Jarman Auditorium, 6-10 pm
- Dinwiddie, VA – Dinwiddie High School (date and details to be announced)

MVP

- August 8, Radford, VA – Radford University, Preston/Bondurant Auditorium
- Chatham, VA – Chatham High School (date and details to be announced)

'Walking the Line' Set for June 17 to July 4

A celebratory walk along the Atlantic Coast Pipeline route in Virginia is planned to commence on June 17 in Highland County and conclude July 2 in Buckingham County at the site of the proposed compressor station. A second leg of the walk will continue July 3 and 4 to the Virginia-North Carolina state line.

"Walking the Line" is being co-sponsored by several ABRA members, including the Sierra Club – Virginia Chapter, Wild Virginia, Highlanders for Responsible Development, Voices From Bath, Augusta County Alliance, Friends of Nelson and Friends of Buckingham. For more information on the event and how to participate, visit the [event's website](#) and [Facebook page](#).

Exxon Shareholders Approve Climate Risk Disclosure Proposal

Exxon's shareholders approved by a 62% favorable vote a proposal calling on the oil and gas giant to assess and disclose how it is preparing its business for the transition to a low-carbon future. The May 31 action, taken over the objection of the company's management, was termed by the *Wall Street Journal* a "major rebuke" and "a powerful symbol that big investors see climate change as a major risk that warrants greater transparency from oil and gas companies." Other petroleum companies that have approved similar resolutions are BP, ConocoPhillips and Royal Dutch Shell.

The [resolution](#) states that:

... beginning in 2018, ExxonMobil publish an annual assessment of the long-term portfolio impacts of technological advances and global climate change policies, at reasonable cost and omitting proprietary information. The assessment can be incorporated into existing reporting and should analyze the impacts on ExxonMobil's oil and gas reserves and resources under a scenario in which reduction in demand results from carbon restrictions

and related rules or commitments adopted by governments consistent with the globally agreed upon 2-degree target. This reporting should assess the resilience of the company's full portfolio of reserves and resources through 2040 and beyond, and address the financial risks associated with such a scenario.

The Exxon shareholders vote comes – ironically – on the day before President Trump's announcement to withdraw the United States from and explore re-negotiating the Paris climate agreement (see news links below, under Big Picture).

Legislation to Boost Public Participation at FERC Introduced in Congress

Legislation that would create an Office of Public Participation and Consumer Advocacy at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has been introduced in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. The "Public Engagement at FERC Act" is designed to assist residential and small commercial energy consumers in participating in FERC proceedings. Specifically, the legislation would:

- Establish an office that would directly participate in FERC proceedings on rates, service, and infrastructure siting to represent the interests of residential and small commercial consumers.
- Employ directed outreach methods, such as consultation services and technical assistance, to ensure the interests of the public are adequately represented at FERC.
- Create a Public and Consumer Advocacy Advisory Committee for the office composed of representatives from the national and state-based nongovernmental consumer advocacy community.
- Prepare reports and issue guidance for potential improvements to industry and FERC practices to better incorporate the public voice.
- Provide intervenor funding to individuals or small commercial energy consumer groups to encourage their participation in FERC proceedings.

In the House, the bill is H.R. 2656, sponsored by Rep. Janet Schakowsky (D-IL-9) and co-sponsored by 4 Democrat Representatives. In the Senate, Sen. Jean Shaheen (D-NH) is the lead sponsor; co-sponsors are 5 fellow Democrats, including Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA). Sen. Shaheen had introduced a similar measure in the last Congress. No number has been assigned the Senate bill at this writing. The legislative text is available [here](#).

In the News:

Breaking News: US out of the Paris Accord

BREAKING: Trump pulls US out of Paris climate accord

- Utility Dive – 6/1/17

<http://www.utilitydive.com/news/breaking-trump-pulls-us-out-of-paris-climate-accord/444032/>

Claiming to advocate for US jobs, Trump doubles down on last-century's technologies.

Related:

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/01/climate/trump-paris-climate-agreement.html>

- https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-to-announce-us-will-exit-paris-climate-deal/2017/06/01/fbcb0196-46da-11e7-bcde-624ad94170ab_story.html

Local/Atlantic Coast Pipeline

State negates sweeping pipeline water review

- The Recorder – 6/1/17

http://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/State_negates_sweeping_pipeline_water_review-Recorder_20170601.pdf

Weeks after “miscommunication” on pipeline review, DEQ struggles to restore its already-compromised credibility

Related:

- http://www.richmond.com/business/virginia-department-of-environmental-quality-denies-backpedaling-on-pipeline-water/article_a3ea4db1-8c62-5c6a-ab2e-e076605f5c63.html
- https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/as-gas-pipelines-roil-virginia-governors-race-regulators-backtrack-on-their-role/2017/05/25/4bdb03e6-4160-11e7-8c25-44d09ff5a4a8_story.html

In Home Stretch of Virginia Gubernatorial Race, Resistance to Atlantic Coast Pipeline Grows

- Natural Gas Intelligence – 5/31/17

http://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/NGI_VA_Gov_Homestretch_Resistance_Grows_20170531.pdf

Related:

- <http://www.nbc29.com/story/35540770/wintergreen-property-owners-plan-fight-against-proposed-pipeline>

To Lead on Climate, Virginia’s Governor Can and Must Stop Pipelines

- Oil Change International – 5/31/17

<http://priceofoil.org/2017/05/31/to-lead-on-climate-virginia-governor-must-stop-pipelines/>

Abdicating authority to protect state citizens and resources (and long-term economic growth) is not leadership.

Report highlights Dominion efforts to secure Atlantic Coast Pipeline approval

- Southeast Energy News – 6/1/17

<https://southeastenergynews.com/2017/06/01/report-highlights-dominion-efforts-to-secure-atlantic-coast-pipeline-approval/>

“The goal of this report is to bring transparency to the powers behind the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP).”

Cave survey protesting pipe route through karst

- The Recorder – 6/1/17

http://www.abralliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Cave_survey_protesting_pipe_route_through_karst-Recorder_20170601.pdf

Adoption of the route variation would be “a violation of Dominion’s proposed Best Management Practices submitted in the January 20, 2017 Karst Terrain Assessment Construction, Monitoring and Mitigation Plan prepared by GeoConcepts Engineering.

Regional/Mountain Valley Pipeline, other

CASEY: Is there more to pipeline flap than a mere 'miscommunication?'

- The Roanoke Times – 6/1/17

http://www.roanoke.com/news/dan_casey/casey-is-there-more-to-pipeline-snafu-than-a-mere/article_3f3b0760-e401-5195-91c4-38b8cadd1f9.html

It’s certainly not out of the question. This IS Virginia, after all. And Dominion!

Pipeline opponents confront survey crews on Bent Mountain

- WDBJ7 News – 5/31/17

<http://www.wdbj7.com/content/news/Pipeline-opponents-confront-survey-crews-on-Bent-Mountain-425586444.html>

US judge denies EPA stay in acting on W.Va. Clean Water Act enforcement

- S&P Global Market Intelligence – 6/1/17

<http://marketintelligence.spglobal.com/our-thinking/news/us-judge-denies-epa-stay-in-acting-on-wva-clean-water-act-enforcement>

Sierra Club, along with Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, and West Virginia Rivers Coalition argued that WVDEP should not be able to stop enforcing pollution standards while it developed a new way to measure them.

Virginia Military Veterans Speak Out Against Fracked-Gas Pipelines

- Blue Virginia – 5/25/17

<http://bluevirginia.us/2017/05/virginia-military-veterans-speak-fracked-gas-pipelines>

“This direct attack on the constitutional rights of landowners goes against the oath we all took when we volunteered to serve this great country.”

US NRC approves new nuclear unit for Dominion's North Anna plant in Virginia

- Platts – 5/31/17

<https://www.platts.com/latest-news/electric-power/washington/us-nrc-approves-new-nuclear-unit-for-dominions-21892141>

Dominion’s captive customers one step closer to being on the hook for \$100 billion!

Big Picture:

China tells Donald Trump there is an 'international responsibility' to act over climate change

- Independent – 6/1/17

<http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/china-donald-trump-climate-change-responsibility-paris-agreement-global-warming-fossil-fuels-a7766451.html>

China, Europe and the rest of the world ready to move forward. US may be left behind.

Related:

- <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/chinas-li-fighting-climate-change-global-consensus-47763489>

Is Trump's Climate-Change Agenda Politically Sustainable?

- The Atlantic – 6/1/17

<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/06/trump-climate-change-paris/528633/>

“Trump is fighting the battle from 10 years ago when coal had a chance.”

Related:

- <http://www.csmonitor.com/Environment/2017/0601/Renewable-energy-continues-to-grow-globally-despite-Trump-moving-in-the-opposite-direction>

- https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/politics/wp/2017/06/01/the-other-climate-change-trump-doesnt-understand-how-the-energy-business-climate-has-shifted/?utm_term=.31e3d10ee892

Are Proposed Natural Gas Pipeline Projects Given Sufficient Review?

- Forbes – 6/1/17

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/kensilverstein/2017/06/01/are-proposed-natural-gas-pipeline-projects-given-sufficient-review/#3b83ffee7f86>

Timely article highlights ACP amongst a plethora of stalled energy projects. Notes FERC’s responsibilities.

Is renewable energy threatening power reliability?

- Utility Dive 6/1/17

<http://www.utilitydive.com/news/is-renewable-energy-threatening-power-reliability/443701/>

Reliability concerns are merely a 'Chicken Little argument' fossil generators use to advance their interests, analysts say.

EPA halts Obama-era rule on methane pollution

- The Hill – 5/31/17

<http://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/335777-epa-halts-obama-era-methane-regulation>

Environmental groups have said they will sue over the decision to reconsider the methane rules.

What FERC Is And Why It Matters

- Huffington Post – 5/30/17

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/what-ferc-is-and-why-it-matters_us_592df000e4b075342b52c114

Exxon Mobil Shareholders Demand Accounting of Climate Change Policy Risks

- The New York Times – 5/31/17

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/31/business/energy-environment/exxon-shareholders-climate-change.html>

A majority of Exxon Mobil's shareholders, in a reversal, have voted in favor of more open and detailed analyses of the risks posed to its business by policies aimed at stemming climate change.

Renewable Energy Growth: 40 Years Ahead of EIA's Forecast

- EcoWatch – 5/30/17

<https://www.ecowatch.com/renewable-energy-growth-eia-2426701265.html>

"While one might conclude that EIA's methodology is seriously flawed, it is also safe to say that renewables—especially solar and wind—are vastly exceeding expectations and breaking records at an astonishing pace."