

The Recorder

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The pipeline, national security, and Dominion's PR machine

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Editor, The Recorder,

“Military Stands Behind Atlantic Coast Pipeline.” This attention-grabbing headline appeared as an “announcement” — likely orchestrated by Dominion — in a recent issue of Virginia Business Daily.

It turns out that the “military” is not the Pentagon, but seven retired officers who think the ACP should be built for national security reasons. They claim an attack on the only pipeline now supplying gas to four eastern Virginia bases might lead to an “intense disruption of military response.”

The article raises questions.

First, if the supply of gas to the bases is essential for national security, why are those bases apparently so dependent on one vulnerable source? Surely, they must have contingency plans.

Second, even if another pipeline were needed to make the military bases more resilient, the huge, 42-inch diameter ACP seems like overkill. Any needed gas could be obtained from existing regional pipelines and delivered to the bases with a much smaller pipe and at lower cost.

Third, how would the additional greenhouse gasses the ACP would transport — the equivalent of 14 million additional cars — square with the Navy's efforts to harden Naval Station Norfolk against rising seas and storm surges?

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline is in trouble. This huge project, which once seemed inevitable, is now 1-2 years behind schedule and \$3 billion over estimated cost. Dominion's projections of future demand have been revealed as inflated, undercutting the justification for building the ACP. Other new and expanded pipelines can supply all the gas needed in Virginia at lower cost than the ACP.

Analysts have pointed out that the ACP would provide a few hundred pipeline jobs, nothing close to the many thousands originally claimed.

Key federal permits have been vacated by the courts, and Dominion is struggling to get them back.

Investors are starting to worry, as shown by Moody's downgrading the ACP to "risky." Businesses are pushing for renewable power not only to polish their image but also because solar and wind are increasingly price competitive with coal and gas, can be installed relatively quickly, and can guarantee stable prices for decades.

Rather than admit the ACP is a bad idea, Dominion continues to crank out public relations pieces like the "announcement" from the retired officers. It's time for Dominion's leaders to shift their focus from quarterly profits to building the new energy economy we must have.

Doug Wellman
Lovington, Va.