

E&E Energywire

AGs press FERC to halt energy projects

Arianna Skibell, E&E News reporter

Published: Friday, May 8, 2020

A coalition of Democratic state attorneys general is urging the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to pause energy infrastructure projects until the threat of the novel coronavirus has eased.

Maryland Attorney General Brian Frosh led the effort in a [letter](#) yesterday to FERC Chairman Neil Chatterjee, asking him to declare an immediate moratorium on approvals of all new and pending natural gas pipelines, liquefied natural gas (LNG) export facilities, and related infrastructure projects until the end of the COVID-19 crisis.

"Doing so is necessary to preserve the due process rights of interested parties, many of whom are dealing with unprecedented challenges to their health and economic wellbeing from the COVID-19 crisis and whose ability to participate in hearings and proceedings may be accordingly constrained," the attorneys said in the letter.

In addition to Frosh, the letter was signed by Maura Healey of Massachusetts, William Tong of Connecticut, Kathleen Jennings of Delaware, Kwame Raoul of Illinois, Keith Ellison of Minnesota, Hector Balderas of New Mexico, Ellen Rosenblum of Oregon, Peter Neronha of Rhode Island, Mark Herring of Virginia and Karl Racine of the District of Columbia.

In the letter, the state attorneys general noted the pandemic has killed thousands of Americans, upending daily life and requiring local governments to turn their attention away from energy infrastructure to combating the virus and protecting constituents.

The attorneys general used the term "fossil fuel infrastructure" to describe interstate natural gas projects. FERC has broad authority to permit pipeline and LNG import and export terminal construction and expansions. FERC proceedings often result in the seizure of private land under eminent domain and shed light on the environmental impact of a proposed energy project.

"Even under typical circumstances, it is difficult for affected stakeholders to fully advocate for their interests," they wrote.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has imposed even greater burdens on communities attempting to organize their interests and participate in Commission proceedings," said the letter. "The Commission should account for the unprecedented hardships the pandemic has imposed on citizens and postpone any approvals of permanent gas infrastructure until those affected by its decisions can once again focus on these matters."

Chatterjee said he had seen the letter. "As with all correspondence that comes to the Commission, we will be responding in due course," he said in a statement to E&E News.