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Governor should think like a doctor about the pipelines

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How can a political leader perform so well on one important issue and so poorly on another?

Gov. Northam has done a good job as leader of Virginia's response to pandemic. He has kept the public informed and given fact-based reasons for the strong measures he has taken. In all aspects of this horrific plague, he has clearly sought to serve the public interest.

Contrast his leadership on the pandemic with his performance in the long struggles over the Atlantic Coast and Mountain Valley pipelines. As inconvenient facts and penetrating analyses have dismantled Dominion's justifications for these costly, destructive and dangerous projects, he has remained on the sidelines. Worse, he summarily removed members of the Air Pollution Control Board who had expressed concerns about the health risks the project posed for the residents of the Union Hill community, virtually ensuring the board would approve Dominion's plan. He also disbanded his own environmental justice advisory group when they raised questions about environmental justice violations at Union Hill.

Gov. Northam is a medical doctor, and he was trained to follow the facts in making diagnoses and, above all, "do no harm" to the patient. Yet, in his handling of the ACP and MVP, he seems oblivious to the dire consequences of not thinking like the doctor he is.

What will it take for the governor to come off the sidelines and apply all his power — political as well as legal — to stopping these unjustified, harmful projects? He now has the political alignment in Richmond to do the right thing, as clearly shown by the passage of the Clean Economy Act and other forward-looking laws. Rather than following Dominion's, he should serve the public interest by following the principles that guided him as a doctor.

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