



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

HOUSE OF DELEGATES
RICHMOND

ELIZABETH R. GUZMAN

POST OFFICE BOX 1818
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THIRTY-FIRST DISTRICT

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:
EDUCATION (VICE-CHAIR)
LABOR AND COMMERCE
HEALTH, WELFARE AND INSTITUTIONS

May 11, 2020

Ralph Northam
Governor
Commonwealth of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218
Sent Via Email: Matt.Mansell@Governor.Virginia.Gov

Kenneth Schrad
Director, Division of Information Resources
State Corporation Commission
P.O. Box 1197
Richmond, VA 23218
Sent Via Email to: Ken.Schrad@Scc.Virginia.Gov

RE: PUR-2019-00207 Virginia Natural Gas - For approval and certification of natural gas facilities: the Header Improvement Project and for approval of Rate Schedules and Terms and Conditions for Pipeline Transportation Service

To Governor Northam and the State Corporation Commission:

We, the undersigned representatives, urge you to deny the certificate of public necessity and any foreseeable permits to Virginia Natural Gas (VNG)'s Header Improvement Project (HIP).

Our nation is experiencing a glut of gas,¹ suggesting Virginia does not need any new gas infrastructure. Furthermore, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Economic Forum announced that the US reached a 16-year low in energy demand.² Based on these trends, it is clear the HIP pipeline and the C4GT gas plant it is to service would most likely face significant economic setbacks that will only burden municipalities and VNG ratepayers. With the project and its buyers facing funding and other economic uncertainties including COVID-19 that may last well into the foreseeable future, this project is too big a financial risk therefore it cannot go forward. As representatives we must act in the best interests of our constituents, and ensure state decisions like these fully weigh the needs and consequences of this project.

Additionally, during today's climate crisis our state administration must recognize that Virginia does not need nor can it afford the negative impacts this fossil-fuel project will bring to communities. Virginia's unprecedented

¹ Krauss, C. (2019, December 11). Natural Gas Boom Fizzles as a U.S. Glut Sinks Profits. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/11/business/energy-environment/natural-gas-shale-chevron.html>

² DiSavino, S. (2020, April 14). COVID-19: America hasn't used this little energy in 16 years. Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/united-states-energy-electricity-power-coronavirus-covid19/>



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rise in sea level,³ severe droughts last October,⁴ struggling fisheries,⁵ and last summer’s severe storm that inundated Northern Virginia with five inches of rain within one-hour demonstrate that the effects of climate change are already apparent.⁶ Not only will this project worsen the climate crisis through the emission of greenhouse gases, HIP will impede on landowner rights, threaten nearby communities’ clean air and water, cut through 68 rivers and streams, and impact over 150 acres of wetlands at the cost of \$20.75 million to VNG ratepayers.

Given this project’s inherent risk to human health, the environment, and ratepayers, ensuring public participation is a high priority and a right for those most directly affected. It is of great concern that the SCC has decided not to take significant action to prioritize robust community engagement, but to adhere to the predetermined schedule, at the height of the COVID-19 state outbreak. Virtual hearings for small numbers in some unique situations might prove to be appropriate, and using these methods for the full hearing body creates significant accessibility barriers for those residents without a computer or reliable internet and cell phone service and there could be unforeseen technological complications that may compromise full participation. We would expect greater consideration from the Commission in these proceedings.

With our state struggling to manage the devastation caused by the coronavirus pandemic and fully experiencing new economic realities and climate change’s impacts, Governor Northam and the SCC must deny VNG HIP’s certificate of necessity and any foreseeable permits. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Delegate Elizabeth Guzman

Delegate Sam Rasoul

Delegate Lee Carter

³ ³ The US Environmental Protection Agency. (2017). *What Climate Change Means for Virginia*. Retrieved from <https://19january2017snapshot.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-09/documents/climate-change-va.pdf>

⁴ ⁴ Stone, M. (2019, October 6). Parts of Virginia now in a severe drought. Retrieved from <https://wtvr.com/2019/10/05/parts-of-virginia-now-in-a-severe-drought/>

⁵ ⁵ Vogelsong, S. (2019, June 24). Virginia fisheries struggle to adapt to changing climate. Retrieved from <https://www.nbc12.com/2019/06/24/virginia-fisheries-struggle-adapt-changing-climate/>

⁶ ⁶ Trompeter, B. (2019, October 11). 'No silver bullet' as Fairfax examines flood-mitigation options. Retrieved from https://www.insidenova.com/news/fairfax/no-silver-bullet-as-fairfax-examines-flood-mitigation-options/article_928ab332-ec16-11e9-8065-db10552e5563.html



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Delegate Kaye Kory

Delegate Imbraheem Samirah

Delegate Patrick Hope

Delegate Dan Helmer

Delegate Mark Keam

Delegate Danica Roem

Delegate Sally Hudson

Delegate Dawn Adams

Senator Ghazala Hashmi