

The Recorder

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Thousands sign letter to end pipeline

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RICHMOND — On May 6, a coalition of advocacy organizations and Virginia residents sent a message to Dominion Energy to abandon its plans to build the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline, according to a news release from Chesapeake Climate Action Network.

The coalition of 78 prominent advocacy organizations from Virginia and across the country, including Allegheny Blue Ridge Alliance, signed a letter that was advertised in the Richmond Times-Dispatch and Washington Post on the day of Dominion’s annual shareholder meeting. The letter, addressed to shareholders, stated, “New legislation and legal challenges have rendered the completion of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline unrealistic.”

The letter pointed to the pipeline’s estimated \$8 billion price tag, eight missing permits necessary for construction, and the fact that Dominion recently informed state regulators that “significant build-out of natural gas generation facilities is not currently viable” under the state’s new law requiring Dominion to achieve 100 percent carbon-free electricity by 2045.

A law signed last month by Gov. Ralph Northam significantly raised the threshold for Dominion to pass any of the cost of the ACP onto ratepayers. In order to recover costs from Virginians as planned, Dominion must now prove a need for the energy the pipeline would supply in Virginia and that the pipeline was the lowest-cost way to produce that energy.

Additionally, two petitions garnering nearly 4,000 signatures were delivered to Dominion executives and shareholders. With one petition, over 2,200 Virginia residents called on Dominion CEO Tom Farrell to walk away from the pipeline “for the financial health of the company.” Another petition gathered over 1,800 signatures to tell Dominion shareholders the pipeline “no longer makes economic sense, even based on Dominion Energy’s own logic,” and “continuing to pursue this project is fiscally irresponsible.”

“Dominion Energy’s stubborn push to continue building the Atlantic Coast Pipeline despite ballooning costs, legal and permitting challenges, and a seismic shift in Virginia’s energy landscape betrays its duty to shareholders,” said Brennan Gilmore, executive director of Clean

Virginia. “The responsible thing — for Virginians and shareholders alike — is for Dominion to shutter the project before another tree is felled.”

“After the coronavirus, the last thing we need is another crisis at our doorstep,” said Harrison Wallace, Virginia Director at the Chesapeake Climate Action Network. “If built, the pipeline would be a disaster for both the economy and public health. And now that the economic case is stronger than ever, it’s time to end this dangerous project once and for all.”

“Our normal way of life because of the pandemic is not even close to returning. Factor this together with the economic uncertainties and the harmful impacts to the health and welfare of many elderly, low income and majority African Americans in the proposed compressor station neighborhood of Union Hill, and you have something that is absolutely unjustified,” said Chad Oba, President Friends of Buckingham. “Recent research shows that higher levels of air pollution increase the risk of death and hospitalization from COVID-19. Increasing toxic emissions takes us on the wrong path, placing Virginians at increased risk from the current pandemic as well as from other cardiovascular and respiratory diseases,” said Samantha Ahdoot, MD, chair of Virginia Clinicians for Climate Action.