

Roanoke Times

Natural gas pipeline bills die in committee

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Sen. Emmett Hanger, R-Augusta County, talks with reporters after his bills dealing with a natural gas pipeline were tabled by the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee during Monday's legislative session in Richmond.

BOB BROWN | Richmond Times-Dispatch

RICHMOND — The trio of pipeline bills introduced by Sen. Emmett Hanger, R-Augusta County, died in committee Monday.

The bills — which sought to open up project records and restrict or repeal a controversial 2004 surveying law — attracted little support in

the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee, though individual lawmakers expressed sympathy for the property owners.

“I don’t want you to be discouraged,” Sen. Jeff McWaters, R-Virginia Beach, told some two dozen landowners who came to Richmond for Monday’s hearing. “... Keep fighting your fight.”

Hanger’s proposals were driven by public opposition to the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, a natural gas line expected to cut across more than a dozen Virginia localities.

Several local landowners have objected to the pipeline coming through their property and oppose laws that allow the Dominion-led energy consortium to do surveying and other work without property owners’ consent.

Hanger’s bills each met slightly different fates Monday, but none will advance. The concept behind SB 1166, an open records bill, was referred to the Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council for study.

SB 1169, which would have restricted a natural gas utility’s right of access to private property, was pulled by Hanger, citing a lack of support for the measure.

The final and strongest measure, SB 1338, failed to get a motion from the committee and died without a vote. SB 1338 would have repealed a 2004 state law allowing interstate natural gas companies to enter private property without consent as long as certain steps and notifications are observed.

— The (Lynchburg) News & Advance