

VOICES
Victory Over InFRACKstructure, Clean Energy inStead

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Community members, NGOs Put Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on Trial
Community representatives testify to FERC's history of abuse & Demand Congressional action

Washington, D.C. - Community members and organizations from across the nation took the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to task today at a virtual hearing for the agency's years of abuse and bias. Organized by the VOICES (Victory Over InFRACKstructure, Clean Energy inStead) coalition, the People's Hearing provided a forum for testifiers to speak out against the harms FERC has inflicted against the environment, communities, property owners and states in its approval of pipelines and fracked gas infrastructure. This is the second People's Hearing the coalition has held after years of calling on Congress to hold hearings into FERC's abuses of power and law.

Testifiers at the hearing included 29 impacted community members and environmental leaders from 10 states who have been directly harmed by FERC's abuses of power and law. Maryland Congressman Jamie Raskin, who has been a leader in Congress on FERC oversight, participated in the event and spoke about the preliminary findings of an investigation by the Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties showing that the natural gas pipeline approval process used by FERC unjustly tramples on the rights of private landowners.

Testifiers at the virtual People's Hearing sought to expose the unchecked and harmful behavior of FERC to members of Congress in order to convince them it was time to pass legislative reforms of the laws governing what they described as a "rogue agency run amok".

"The abuses inflicted by FERC on people's rights, states' rights, our environment and future generations is obscene," **said Maya van Rossum**, the Delaware Riverkeeper, leader of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, a founder of VOICES, and a primary organizer of the event. "Congress needs to recognize that major changes are necessary to protect people, states and the environment from FERC's ongoing abuses of power. I hope the powerful testimony from today's hearing inspires Congress to finally act to reform the Natural Gas Act and to check this rogue agency run amok."

"Same abuses, new victims," **said Karen Feridun**, Founder of Pennsylvania-based Berks Gas Truth. "For years, people have shared the stories of the harms and injustices they have suffered because of chronic abuses inflicted by FERC. It's time for members of Congress to stop the abuses and take swift action to put in place the long-overdue reforms the VOICES coalition has proposed."

"How much money makes it ok to poison people and the planet?" **said Mary Finneran**, an environmental, peace and social justice activist who has been fighting fracking infrastructure for over a decade and who testified during the hearing.

"It is time to STOP FERC from Issuing Permits to these companies that are destroying this country, just to Increase their Profit Margin," **said Richard Walker**, ACP & MVP Pipeline Resister.

"In 2014 Mountain Valley Pipeline, LLC notified me they intended to place their unnecessary frack gas pipeline across the family farm. That is when I was introduced to the bizarre and seemingly corrupt government agency FERC which has at every turn permitted and accommodated the destruction of my

family farm and the land of hundreds of people along the pipeline right of way. FERC and the use of Eminent Domain must be reformed to respect the rights of private property owners, which is the heart and backbone of our democracy,” **said Maury Johnson**, an impacted landowner along the path of the Mountain Valley Pipeline in Southern West Virginia.

“I have dealt with many federal agencies during my career and my life, and I have always been impressed with their professionalism, and public service. Unfortunately, I have not experienced this with FERC,” **said Bill Limpert**, a landowner impacted by the Atlantic Coast Pipeline and a member of the steering committee for the Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance (ABRA).

“It’s decades overdue time for Congress and FERC to reckon the economic and social costs to our nation of FERC’s endorsement of fracked gas and oil sponsored data to approve fossil fuel development. The 8 Atlantic Coast Pipeline permits vacated in federal appeals court exposed Dominion’s false data and omissions by legal challenged based on replicable scientific data. The depth of deception and breadth of costs to frontline people’s lives and to the climate of fossil fuel industry sponsored data may now be justly compared with that of the tobacco and opioid pharmaceutical industries,” **said Lakshmi Fjord**, an environmental justice activist anthropologist.

“Investors also get hurt by failed multi-billion projects. The cancellation of Dominion’s Atlantic Coast Pipeline boondoggle has led to a projected decrease in dividend payouts. Mountain Valley’s investors are probably destined for the same outcome as the investors in the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. FERC needs to maintain oversight of the projects they certify to protect the public’s interests. When a project goes off the rails like the Mountain Valley Pipeline then they need to revoke the certification instead of allowing staff to issue hundreds of variances,” **said Freeda Cathcart**, an energy investor.

“If FERC isn’t willing or able to regulate us away from a climate apocalypse, it will be up to Congress to compel them to do so,” **said Tim Spiese**, member of Lancaster Against Pipelines.

“Over the years FERC has become so imbalanced that its overwhelming focus on the industry results in affected landowners and communities being ignored and run over. For most Americans, land/real estate is our largest personal financial asset. FERC must finally begin recognizing that its decisions affect more than the industry,” **said Irene E. Leech**, Friends of Buckingham and Preserve Montgomery County, VA.

“The greed of the Federal Regulatory Commission (FERC) and its contingencies has caused America to break its laws and submit to injustices. This predatory exploitation should be outlawed,” **said Valerie Williams**, President of the Concerned Stewards of Halifax.

Twenty-nine people testified at the virtual event led by van Rossum and Feridun who offered insights into how today’s testimony reflected abuses happening nationwide and spanning many years.

Register to view the event, scheduled from 10am - 4pm, here: <http://bit.ly/RegisterVirtualHearing>

View the livestream of the event

here: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2516165952006856&extid=dYzWDyUY1drbNhfC>

View a recording of the event here: <https://www.stopthepipelines.org/peoples-hearing/>

The VOICES coalition includes over 350 grassroots activists, environmental leaders, lawyers, and experts and 250 environmental organizations from over 35 states fighting to end the abuses of FERC in its approval of fracked gas infrastructure.

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