

## VOICES

### *Victory Over InFRACKstructure, Clean Energy inStead*

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#### **VOICES Coalition holds Congressional Briefing on needed FERC reforms *Hour-long briefing outlined the abuses of Power and Law inflicted by FERC***

*Washington, D.C.* - The VOICES (Victory Over InFRACKstructure, Clean Energy inStead) coalition today held a virtual Congressional briefing to call upon Congress to undertake meaningful legislative reforms to the Natural Gas Act to address the ongoing abuses of power and law by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) when it comes to their rubberstamp approval of fracked gas infrastructure projects. Participants included Congressman Jamie Raskin, Congresswoman Nanette Diaz Barragán, nonprofit representatives, and members of frontline communities impacted by natural gas pipelines and their infrastructure.

The event was part of the VOICES Coalition's efforts to bring attention to FERC's repeated abuses and seek reform of the Natural Gas Act. Testifiers during the hearing outlined the key reforms that VOICES is calling for, including ending the abuse of tolling orders, the need to consider climate change impacts of projects, and prohibiting the use of eminent domain before all approvals for a project have been received.

"As chair of the House Oversight Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, I was disturbed by allegations that the FERC process allows natural gas companies to abuse landowners and farmers who live along proposed pipeline routes. So, I decided to investigate and dig deeper into the issues we were hearing about at FERC, and what we found was frankly appalling. The FERC process demands immediate reform, and I am committed to addressing these issues through continued oversight of FERC and through legislative reform," **said Congressman Jamie Raskin, chair of the House Oversight Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties.**

"Today's briefing further highlighted the many abuses of FERC, which continues to misuse its authority to disenfranchise the public, undermine the rights of states, inflict irreparable harm on our environment, exacerbate the climate crisis, and trample on the rights of people and property owners," **said Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper, leader of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network,** and a leading member of the VOICES coalition, a national coalition opposing the advancement of FERC approved infrastructure and calling for FERC reform. "For over six years we have been calling for needed reforms to FERC. We have begun to hear recognition from Congress that industry access to the halls of power and the misuse of authority by agencies like FERC are growing out of control. While hearings have been held about FERC, it is time for Congress to advance substantive reforms to the Natural Gas Act and FERC to prevent further harm to our environment and communities," van Rossum added.

"For too long, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has treated the public the way a dog treats a hydrant," **said Karen Feridun, Founder, Berks Gas Truth.** "The Commission has willfully ignored the arguments made by people, the evidence provided by experts, and the orders handed down by courts. It's time to revamp a Commission that clearly has no interest in changing its ways. It's time for Congress to step in and force the changes FERC won't make on its own."

“The efforts by FERC Chairman Richard Glick to improve FERC’s review of proposed projects so they consider climate and environmental justice impacts are a good first step,” **said Congresswoman Nanette Diaz Barragán**. “However, we need this to lead to better decisions by FERC. Implementing environmental justice and climate standards into FERC’s system is a critical part of an all-of-government approach to tackle environmental injustice and the climate crisis.” Born to immigrant parents in Harbor City, California, Congresswoman Nanette Diaz Barragán was first elected to represent California’s 44<sup>th</sup> District in 2016. Barragán serves on the Energy and Commerce and Homeland Security Committee, where she serves as Chair of the Border Security, Facilitation and Operations Subcommittee. Legislatively, Barragán focuses on the environment, healthcare and immigration.

“Citizens expect FERC to facilitate fairness, not help industry take advantage of us. It’s time to update FERC’s mission,” **said Irene E. Leech, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Consumer Studies, Virginia Tech**.

“In addition to the local impacts of installing pipe, FERC needs to consider the true costs of fossil gas pipelines - the upstream impacts of expanded fracking and the downstream greenhouse gas emissions. The Commission cannot keep ignoring climate change when rubber-stamping gas projects, it must take a forward-looking approach to the clean energy transition and stop uncritically expanding new fossil fuel infrastructure,” **said Adam Carlesco, Staff Attorney, Food & Water Watch**.

“Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) reforms are long overdue. We hope that these improvements would result in healthier communities free from the dangers posed by fossil fuel infrastructure. In March 2021, Environmental Health News reported their findings on [families with harmful chemicals in their children’s bodies due to unconventional hydraulic fracturing](#). Physical harm to children should never be the price we pay in order for a company to make a short-term profit. Renewable energy solutions are already available and proving advantageous; they are critical in safeguarding our children’s future,” **said Blair Nelsen, Executive Director, Waterspirit**.

“After years fighting the Mountain Valley & Atlantic Coast Pipelines, the citizens of my area have realized that FERC is on the side of industry and not an "Independent" regulatory agency. It has been the ordinary citizens who originally organized to fight the injustices and abuses of the oil and gas industry, who uses the power of eminent domain bestowed on them by FERC to bully and abuse landowners. FERC does nothing to police the industry, but rather operates as a "rubber stamp agency" for the industry,” **said Maury Johnson, Board Member of Preserve Monroe, Executive Committee Member of Preserve Our Water Heritage & Rights Coalition**.

The abuses of FERC have been well-documented over several years and compiled into the People’s Dossier of FERC’s Abuses of Power and Law. View the dossier at: <http://bit.ly/DossierofFERCAbuse>.

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