

# VOICES

## Victory Over InFRACKstructure, Clean Energy InStead

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### Statement from the national *VOICES Coalition*

#### Lambasting Senators Manchin, Hoeven and Colleagues for FERC Pro-Pipeline Letter

Senators Joe Manchin (D-WV) and John Hoeven (R-ND), joined by two Democratic and 21 Republican colleagues, called on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) to approve “without further delay” natural gas pipeline projects currently before the Commission for Certification. The letter urges the immediate approval so the proposed projects cannot be slowed by current attempts to strengthen FERC’s environmental justice and climate policies. The move demonstrates the indifference of the authors to the real impacts pipeline projects have on communities, especially low income and communities of color, and on our ability to mitigate the effects of climate change.

“Senator Manchin and his pro-pipeline colleagues should be deeply ashamed of themselves. They were elected to office to represent the people of their states and our nation. With this letter they are taking a firm stance to help the pipeline industry run roughshod over the needs and rights of people, communities and future generations. FERC is a known Rubber Stamp of pipelines, approving over 99.3% of all projects before them for approval. The pipeline companies, with FERC’s help, have stomped on environmental justice, property rights, peoples’ rights, environmental rights, state’s rights, and the rights of future generations to a safe and livable climate,” said **Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper, leader of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, and a founding member of the VOICES Coalition** who organized a Congressional briefing held today to highlight needed reforms to address abuses of power and law by FERC. “Senator Manchin’s home state of West Virginia has been among those hardest hit from pipelines like Mountain Valley and Atlantic Coast. The pipeline companies don’t need Senator Manchin’s help; the people of West Virginia and our nation do. The pro-pipeline letter is a stunning abuse of Senator Manchin’s position as an elected official; he is clearly working for the pipeline companies that have contributed so generously to his political coffers rather than the people of West Virginia and our nation who he is supposed to be serving and protecting,” added van Rossum.

The letter comes as some members of Congress are starting to take a hard look at much-needed reforms of FERC’s handling of natural gas infrastructure projects that includes Congressional investigations and hearings by the House Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties and the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, as well as meetings with constituents directly impacted by FERC regulated fracked gas infrastructure.

“Senators Manchin, Hoeven, and the others will be disappointed to learn that environmental justice and climate change are exactly the issues FERC is supposed to take into consideration before allowing any pipeline to be built. They aren’t new concepts being forced upon the Commission. They are key considerations the Commission has ignored throughout its existence. The letter puts the dismissive attitude of Manchin and the others on display and calls into question what they think representative government means,” said **Karen Feridun, Founder of Berks Gas Truth, a co-founder of VOICES** and herself on the front lines of pipeline battles involving FERC.

As part of the effort to understand the abuses of FERC and needed reforms, Representatives from 20 Congressional offices attended a congressional briefing today to learn about the firsthand experiences of frontline communities impacted by FERC regulated pipelines and to hear why Natural Gas Act reform is essential before FERC is allowed to continue what has been identified as a “Rubber Stamp” approval process. The Congressional briefing was organized by the VOICES coalition and included multiple witnesses working on the frontlines of projects being advanced by FERC and experiencing firsthand the many abusive practices designed to empower the pipeline companies regardless of the devastating consequences for property owners, the environment, the climate crisis, the rule of law and states’ rights.

“Notably, no one from the Senators’ offices who signed the letter bothered to take one hour out of their day to attend the VOICES briefing and hear how people, some of them constituents, are harmed by FERC regulated pipelines,” noted van Rossum. The VOICES briefing included information on 10 needed Natural Gas Act reforms focused on reining in FERC’s abuses of power and law, brought forth witnesses that spoke firsthand about how FERC has empowered pipeline companies and abused communities; and is providing additional materials illustrating evidence of the need for Natural Gas Act and FERC reform. The need to address issues of Environmental Justice and Climate were among the essential Natural Gas Act reforms that were highlighted.

Congressman Jamie Raskin joined the briefing to highlight findings from a congressional investigation by his House Oversight Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties that has spanned the last two years and has secured evidence verifying the claims of harm experienced by people and communities. Congresswoman Nannette Diaz Barragán, who serves on the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, also joined the briefing and spoke passionately about the environmental justice ramifications for communities of color and low-income communities resulting from FERC’s inequitable process and her concerns for the health and safety of communities and future generations.

***VOICES is a coalition of 250 organizations working in 35 states to challenge FERC review and approval of pipelines and LNG infrastructure projects.***