



November 20, 2013

The Honorable Peter Welch
U.S. House of Representatives
2303 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Welch:

On behalf of home heating oil dealers and related companies in the State of Vermont, we urge you to oppose the Natural Gas Pipeline Permitting Reform Act (H.R.1900) when it reaches the floor later this week.

If enacted, H.R.1900 would require the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) determine the “public convenience and necessity” of an interstate natural gas pipeline application within 12 months after providing public notice of the permit application. It would require any other federal regulators that license, permit or approve the siting, construction, expansion, or general operation of the pipeline reach a decision within 90 days. Failure to meet these deadlines would automatically approve the pipeline.

There is little reason to believe regulators will be able to meet these arbitrary deadlines. Each proposed pipeline project carries with it its own complexities including environmental risks and effects on the health and economic welfare of residents and local businesses and their employees. The FERC and other regulators should therefore be free to evaluate proposed pipelines without a proverbial “gun to their heads.” Further, as lead agency in coordinating review of natural gas pipeline applications, the FERC already often sets 90-day deadlines for other agencies. This legislation is unnecessary and would simply create an automatic “stamp of approval” for new or expanded interstate natural gas pipelines.

Rather than deregulate the natural gas pipeline permitting process, Congress should require that regulators and gas companies mitigate harmful fugitive methane emissions leaks and prevent pipeline explosions by requiring that the thousands of miles of aging and obsolete natural gas pipelines in the existing network be repaired or replaced.

Consider the following:

- At a Senate hearing this month, a scientist from the Natural Resources Defense Council warned that an “increased use of natural gas will aggravate smog, expose the public to more carcinogenic chemicals and worsen climate change”;
- Natural gas is 90% methane – a volatile substance that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates is 86 times more potent a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide (over 20 years);
- According to an August, 2013 House Natural Resources Committee staff report, natural gas distribution companies reported releasing 69 billion cubic feet of natural gas into the atmosphere in 2011, equivalent to the annual carbon dioxide emissions of about six million automobiles;

- The report also found that U.S. consumers have paid an estimated \$20 billion between 2000-2011 for leaked natural gas;
- Over the past ten years, natural gas pipelines have experienced almost 800 significant incidents, including several hundred explosions that killed 116 people, injured 465 others, and caused more than \$800 million in property damage; and
- Despite this, the U.S. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration told ProPublica last year that only 7% of gas lines are subject to rigorous inspection criteria or regularly scheduled inspections (as opposed to 44% for liquid fuel pipelines).

H.R.1900 would also make the home energy market in the Northeast less competitive and put thousands of small businesses energy companies at risk. The U.S. heating oil industry is comprised of mostly small, family-run businesses that employ over 40,000 people nationwide and sell a safe, efficient and increasingly environmentally-friendly fuel that heats over 6 million homes. In Vermont, home heating oil dealers provide a quality product that heats nearly 120,000 homes and a personal level of customer service that natural gas utilities cannot provide. They should remain part of our energy mix to ensure competition and consumer choice.

Again, we urge you to defend the environment, to stand up for small businesses hard working Americans and to preserve the health of our economy. Please vote “no” on H.R.1900.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Michael C. Trunzo, President & CEO

cc: Matt Cota, Executive Director, Vermont Fuel Dealers Association
NEFI State Chairman Rob Stenger of Simple Energy in West Lebanon, New Hampshire