

August 6, 2018

The Honorable John Barrasso  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works  
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works  
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

Consumer Energy Alliance (CEA) brings together families, farmers, small businesses, distributors, producers and manufacturers to support America's energy future. With more than 500,000 members nationwide, our mission is to help ensure stable prices and energy security for households across the country. We believe energy development is something that touches everyone in our nation, and thus it is necessary for all of us to actively engage in the conversation about how we develop our diverse energy resources and energy's importance to the economy.

CEA strongly supports S. 3303, the Water Quality Certification Improvement Act, in order to clarify the Clean Water Act (CWA) and eliminate unnecessary delays in developing our nation's crucial energy infrastructure. Under the influence of anti-energy activists, several states have abused loopholes within the CWA's Section 401 certification process in an effort to block or stall interstate pipeline projects. We have seen state agencies employ intentional bureaucratic delays in accepting and reviewing applications and denying permits for political purposes outside the clear scope of the law. This comes at a significant cost to citizens and businesses downstream struggling with high energy costs and supply disruptions.

Northeastern grid operators faced serious challenges due a shortage of pipeline capacity during back to back winter storms earlier this year. In January 2018, Gordon van Welie, President and Chief Executive Officer of ISO New England, testified before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. In his statement he noted the challenges regional power plants face due to limited natural gas pipeline capacity. He added, "New England's limited fuel infrastructure will eventually cause severe reliability issues if fuel security is not addressed."

In order to meet energy demands during this crucial period, natural gas from Russia was imported and distributed to power generation plants and local utilities. New England families received utility bills an estimated 400 to 600 percent higher due to the inability to deliver domestic natural gas supplies for home heating. At one point last winter, the Boston area was paying the highest price for natural gas in the industrialized world. If another similar storm event occurs, ISO New England's Operational Fuel Security Analysis notes it could result in rolling blackouts throughout the region.

As states continue to obstruct future pipeline infrastructure development under the CWA, local economies and businesses also suffer as job creation is halted along construction routes and at pipeline terminals.

Our nation possesses an abundance of affordable energy resources and we should not be forced to rely on expensive foreign fuel to heat American homes. We support a robust and rigorous oversight process to ensure operators are being held to a high standard, but we cannot let interstate projects designed for the good of the country to be intentionally and arbitrarily frustrated for political purposes. CEA urges you to approve S. 3303 and hopes that under your leadership we are able to commence with a clarified and efficient approval process for pipeline infrastructure projects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Holt", written in a cursive style.

David E. Holt  
President

