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The Honorable John Barrasso
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and
Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-6175

The Honorable Tom Carper
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and
Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-6175

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper,

it is critically important, both for New York State, and for the entirety of the Northeast, that your committee support reform of the Water Quality Certification Improvement Act of 2018. I am the President of the New York State Pipe Trades Association; our organization represents 30,000 members who perform plumbing, steamfitting, HVAC, and fire protection installation throughout all sixty-two counties of the great state of New York.

Thousands of our members are trained in pipeline installation and maintenance, and would be in a position to work on these projects starting tomorrow, if they were able to. Given both my office and the members that we represent, I feel uniquely qualified to testify as to how the current section 401 of the Clean Water Act has been used in many instances as a cudgel, preventing growth throughout our region.

New York has had several pipeline projects approved by the federal government in recent years, only to have these projects ultimately stymied and blocked by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. In these instances, the DEC is not making movements out of concerns for the environment; as we all know, FERC approval requires extensive time and consideration in their review process. The reasons these projects are being held up by New York are entirely political, and there are very real consequences for doing so.

Our members are being deprived of thousands of man hours of work on these projects, where they would be well paid and receive excellent benefits. On a larger scale, New York's abuse of the Clean Water Act has driven up energy costs to exorbitant levels throughout New England. In order to heat their homes last winter, New Englanders were forced to import natural gas from Russia.

NEW YORK STATE PIPE TRADES ASSOCIATION

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In a time where America could and should be approaching energy independence, a few politically motivated actors have been able to abuse existing law in order to block responsible and environmentally safe pipeline infrastructure.

The consequences of these actions are real. The economy of the Northeast is suffering from unnecessarily inflated energy prices, we are forced to turn to foreign entities in order to power our homes. and thousands of men and women are being deprived good-paying jobs expanding environmentally safe energy infrastructure.

We at the New York State Pipe Trades Association sincerely believe that the clarifying language set about by the Water Quality Certification Improvement Act of 2018 will go a long way in rectifying some of these problems. By setting a path of clear and efficient permitting processes for pipelines, we will know that safe projects are being licensed in a timely fashion. Our members, New York State, and the entire Northeast economy will be better for it.

Sincerely,

Greg Lancette
President
New York State Pipe Trades Association