

**Alaska Wilderness League \* Center for Biological Diversity \* Clean Water Action \*  
Defenders of Wildlife \* Earthjustice \* Environment America \*  
League of Conservation Voters \* Natural Resources Defense Council \*  
Sheep Mountain Alliance \* Sierra Club \* Western Environmental Law Center \*  
Wilderness Workshop**

October 28, 2013

Dear Representative,

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters, we are writing to express our strong opposition to the “North American Energy Infrastructure Act” (H.R. 3301). This legislation is an effort to ram through permits for new cross-border oil and gas pipelines and electric transmission lines with virtually no review or public participation.

Under the bill, projects to import or export oil, gas or electricity across the Canadian or Mexican borders would have to be approved within 120 days unless the relevant official determines that the project “is not in the national security interests” of the U.S. This would exempt the projects from the National Environmental Policy Act, wiping out longstanding requirements that agencies determine whether such projects are actually needed and that provide the public with the right to comment and review alternatives. In addition, the bill eliminates pre-project reviews to determine if a project is actually in our national interest.

Large, complicated, risky projects like pipelines and transmission facilities are precisely the types of activities that ought to be well-planned and reviewed before they are built and consequently transfer public lands and resources in order to benefit foreign and private interests. Failure to do so not only results in threats to public safety, but can also harm our economy and environment.

Indeed, recent pipeline spills have underscored the need for thorough assessments before construction begins. For example, in 2010, a pipeline carrying tar sands oil burst and spilled over 1.1 million gallons of heavy crude into the Michigan’s Kalamazoo River, costing over one billion dollars to date, forcing nearly 150 families to permanently relocate, shutting down local businesses, and adversely impacting the health of residents. Unfortunately, this is not an anomaly. Instead, the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration reports that there has been an average of 100 reported pipeline spills of over 50 barrels every year over the last ten years, spilling millions of gallons of hazardous liquids and costing billions in property damage.

With regard to electricity transmission, no compelling need for the provisions in this Act has been shown. Indeed, coordination between and among transmission permitting authorities already exists and has been steadily improving. Canadian transmission authorities participate in transmission planning activities with their American counterparts in both the Western and Eastern Interconnections. The provisions of this bill could result in poorly planned, unjustified, unnecessary and costly transmission projects

that American taxpayers would have to live with for generations. Finally, truncating environmental review and permitting processes to meet the arbitrary timeline of this bill disenfranchises communities that would be affected by the transmission.

Instead of improving responsible siting, construction and operation of oil and gas pipelines and electric transmission facilities, this bill goes in the opposite direction by forcing these projects through no matter what the costs may be. For these reasons, we urge you to oppose this bill.

Sincerely,

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