

Ella Rose Testimony
Committee on Natural Resources
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“Energy Infrastructure and Environmental Justice”

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My name is Ella Rose and I was born and raised in Nelson County, Virginia.

I retired to Buckingham County, a neighboring county about eight years ago. I learned about the Atlantic Coast Pipeline and the associated compressor station in 2014. A neighbor invited me to a church meeting where a newly organized group, Friends of Buckingham, were conducting a meeting to share information and concerns and to learn more about what this would mean for our neighborhood. The more I learned the more I realized that I had to protect my home and community. This was especially so when I learned that the location of the compressor station, a very large, noisy polluting infrastructure was on land only 150 feet from my front door. There were originally three considerations for the placement of the compressor station. Dominion Energy decided to place it in our 84% African American neighborhood of Union Hill. Opposing the pipeline and compressor station became a full time job for me as I became more and more active. This was not the plan I had for my retirement. I had spent much of my life working in cities and they were noisy and chaotic. This home that I had just moved into 2 years before and had taken many

years working to pay for was the peace and quiet that I had always hoped for. I enjoy the wildlife nearby including looking out my windows to see deer, turkey and occasionally a bear. These are simple pleasures and it is very valuable to me to be able to enjoy them.

Although it was not something I was use to doing I began to speak at public hearings. It started with the local ones which were necessary for Dominion Energy to obtain from the county, such as the Special Use Permit as the rural area of Union Hill was zoned for Agriculture. I also spoke at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Hearings and later at multiple hearings with the Va Department of Environmental Quality.

Despite my efforts to make my voice heard I felt largely ignored by the local government, FERC and Va DEQ. No one from the Federal Government had come to talk to the community about this project and Dominion acted like the pipes were already in the ground. The Department of Environmental Quality finally came 4 years later at the invitation of Friends of Buckingham and only after we had raised the public awareness of the location in our low income and African American neighborhood.

There was an attitude from Dominion that the project was inevitably going to happen and we all needed to accept it. This is what divided the community. Many who had not been coming to our meetings and weren't informed as some of us in the community, decided to take the deals that

Dominion was offering such as a community center. Many of us who were on the other side of this were not invited to those meetings. So deals were struck based on the compressor station being built. I was not included in any of those negotiations nor was the Friends of Buckingham where I was now a Council member.

My concerns about the compressor station were multiple. I was very concerned about the air quality as I was so close. I would have been forced to breath the emissions on a daily 24/7 basis for the rest of my life in this location. I was deeply concerned that I would develop respiratory problems or other medical conditions as a result of these emissions. My sister in law who lives across the road already has respiratory problems as do many others in our community. I was aware that there would be blowdowns when a larger amount of the emissions would be blown into the air. When Dominion first started talking about these blowdowns during the local meetings with our Board of Supervisors they said they would only occur once every few years. Over time the information changed with at last count being multiple times per week. It seems that we were getting a lot of misinformation. This did not increase my trust in them. I was also concerned about the constant noise and what it would do to my stress levels. I was additionally afraid of what a pipeline with all the digging and

trenching would do to my shallow well, my only source of drinking water, which was the same for many other community members.

I was also troubled by the reason my neighborhood was selected for the location of the compressor station. My neighborhood is predominately African American. It is 84% African American, settled after emancipation by the enslaved Freedmen people who worked the plantations in the area. The Environmental Impact Studies never indicated this. It is one of the reasons I believe we won in the Fourth Circuit. DEQ did not take into consideration who lived there and the disproportionate impact on us. I believe that they picked this location and not the other two they had identified because they did not think we would speak up. Our lives count and we should not be a sacrifice zone for financial interests.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak about my experiences.

