

# SENATE OF VIRGINIA

## JOHN S. EDWARDS

21ST SENATORIAL DISTRICT  
ALL OF GILES COUNTY; ALL OF THE CITY OF ROANOKE;  
AND PART OF MONTGOMERY AND ROANOKE COUNTIES  
POST OFFICE BOX 1179  
ROANOKE, VIRGINIA 24006-1179  
ROANOKE: (540) 985-8690  
FACSIMILE: (540) 345-9950  
RICHMOND: (804) 698-7521  
DISTRICT21@SENATE.VIRGINIA.GOV



COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:  
RULES, CHAIR  
COMMERCE AND LABOR  
COURTS OF JUSTICE  
EDUCATION AND HEALTH  
FINANCE

June 16, 2015

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
888 First Street NE  
Washington D.C. 20426

Attn: Paul Friedman

Re: Mountain Valley Pipeline LLC; Docket No. PF15-3-000

Dear Sir/Madame:

I am State Senator for the 21<sup>st</sup> District of Virginia, which includes the counties of Giles, Montgomery and Roanoke and the City of Roanoke. The proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline would run through much of my district. I have heard from many of my constituents regarding their genuine environmental and safety concerns about the proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline project.

I am requesting on behalf of my constituents that you extend the number of scoping meetings and the time period for considering this important decision to allow more input on the part of the public. As an example, I attended a scoping meeting in Elliston in which many more people signed up to comment than time permitted, including yours truly.

I am submitting herein my comments with regard to the proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline project, pursuant to your Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Planned Mountain Valley Pipeline Project, Request for Comments on Environmental Issues, and Notice of Public Scoping Meetings, dated April 17, 2015.

In my comments, I wish to associate myself with those in opposition to the Mountain Valley Pipeline project.

\* \* \*

Some of the environmental and safety reasons for objecting to the project are the following:

**First**, the largest earthquake in Virginia occurred in 1897 with its epicenter in Giles County, part of my district. The shock was felt from Indiana and Kentucky to the Atlantic coast

line and from Pennsylvania to Georgia. The earthquake caused the walls of brick houses to crack and bricks were thrown from chimneys. The damage was felt for many miles, all the way to Bedford and Roanoke in the east, to Bristol and Knoxville, Tennessee, in the west and to Raleigh, North Carolina in the southeast.

The seismological activity emanating from the fault lines still exists to this day. Another earthquake can be expected at some time in the future without notice or warning. Recall the Louisa county earthquake in Virginia causing extensive damage that came without any warning. When another earthquake happens – sooner or later – a 42 inch natural gas pipeline would likely rupture and the highly flammable gas would likely explode causing devastating damage to the environment throughout the region. Clearly, the environmental disaster of such an explosion would be incalculable and the safety of the region would be dramatically impacted.

**Secondly**, the many pure aquifers in the region – and rivers and streams -- are relied upon for clean, safe drinking water. They would likely be disturbed by construction and maintenance of the pipeline. The last earthquake is known to have caused the aquifers to be muddied and contaminated. Moreover, earth fissures were noted after the last earthquake. Safe, clean drinking water is especially important to the hundreds of thousands of people who live in this region.

**Thirdly**, the topography of the “karst” limestone in this region is mountainous and hilly and there are numerous caves and sinkholes in the area. In prehistoric times, there were giant landslides in the region. In fact, the largest known landslides in eastern North America -- and also among the largest in the world -- occurred in Montgomery and Craig counties. One landslide was more than three miles long. In short, the “karst” topography is too unstable and mountainous for a 42 inch pipeline to be safely built and maintained.

**Fourthly**, the scaring of the mountain sides and terrain caused by constructing and maintaining a 42 inch pipeline would obviously adversely affect the scenic view shed of the region. This is particularly important to the ecotourism associated with the area. The scenic beauty and recreational advantages of this region are critical to the region’s economy, and they would be severely adversely impacted by the pipeline.

Many property owners in this region are genuinely and legitimately concerned about the negative impact on their property values. These include existing home owners, whether living in subdivisions and otherwise, and those planning residential developments. Damages to property values would be incalculable. Likewise, the effect on economic development projects, industrial parks and the university could be significant.

**Fifthly**, there are also threatened and endangered species of fish, animal and plant life that could be adversely affected.

**Sixthly**, much of this region is protected by the Jefferson National Forest and other parts are protected by land trusts from developments in perpetuity under the Virginia Conversation Easement Act. Other lands are protected under the federal Wilderness Act of 1964. These protected lands should not be disturbed by construction and maintenance of the pipeline.

The Appalachian Trail (AT), which would be crossed by a pipeline at a number of places, is important to the environment and eco-tourism of this region. Likewise, the Blue Ridge Parkway, which would also have to be crossed, is also important to the environment and eco-tourism. Both would be disturbed and adversely affected by construction and maintenance of the pipeline.

**Finally**, there are alternatives. These include transporting the natural gas by rail or truck. If there is to be a pipeline, it should be sited on flat terrain and not through the mountainous limestone terrain of our region. As your "Request for Comments on Environmental Issues" is limited, please note that my comments are limited to these issues.

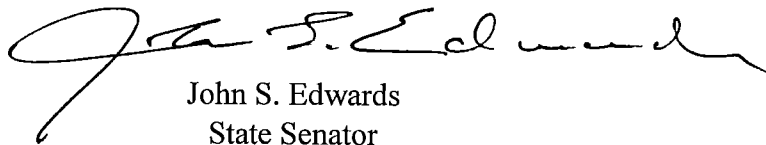
\* \* \*

Most of the local governments in this region have voiced strong formal opposition to this pipeline. As elected officials, they are reflecting the deep seated sentiment of many of their constituents who live in and know this region well.

For these numerous environmental and safety reasons expressed above, I wish to register my strong opposition to the siting of the Mountain Valley Pipeline project in this region.

I appreciate your consideration of these concerns and those of my constituents in this matter.

Sincerely,



John S. Edwards  
State Senator