



January 22, 2025

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

The Distribution Contractors Association (DCA) represents contractors, suppliers and manufacturers who provide distribution construction services including installation, replacement and rehabilitation of natural gas distribution systems as well as gas transmission pipelines in communities across the country. DCA offers the following perspective on federal energy policy as your administration and the 119th Congress begins its work.

Critical Role of Natural Gas

It is clear to most in the energy industry that the America cannot achieve its clean energy ambitions without natural gas production, gas-fired electric generation and a large expansion of the natural gas pipeline network. DCA members build and rebuild gas distribution systems across the country, and we believe that the increasing hostility regarding the important role that natural gas plays in providing a sustainable source of American energy is largely misplaced.

Natural gas plays a crucial role in ensuring energy security for the United States. As one of the largest producers of natural gas, America has enjoyed reduced dependence on foreign energy sources, fostering greater economic and geopolitical stability. Expanding pipeline infrastructure will strengthen this advantage by enabling efficient movement of natural gas across regions, reducing bottlenecks, and enhancing our resilience to potential disruptions.

America's domestic natural gas has been a driver of economic growth, supporting millions of jobs across production, transportation, and manufacturing. In addition, affordable natural gas has helped U.S. manufacturers remain competitive globally, enabling lower production costs in energy-intensive industries like steel, chemicals, and plastics.

Need for Expanded Infrastructure

Pipeline infrastructure plays a key role in ensuring the environmental benefits of natural gas are maximized. A lack of adequate pipelines often leads to producers flaring or venting natural gas, which contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and negates the environmental advantages of this resource. Expanding America's pipeline network would reduce flaring, ensuring natural gas is efficiently captured and transported to markets where it can displace higher-emission fuel sources.

However, despite the clear benefits of natural gas, opposition to pipeline projects often delays or derails critical infrastructure development. Concerns about environmental impacts and safety are often based on misconceptions that fail to account for the advancements in pipeline technology and regulation. Modern pipelines are designed with state-of-the-art safety features, and the entire industry is subject to stringent federal and state oversight to ensure compliance with environmental and safety standards.

The fact is, pipelines are the safest and most efficient means of transporting natural gas, oil, and other energy sources.

Yet, a lack of adequate pipeline infrastructure has created inefficiencies that hamper the full realization of these benefits. Bottlenecks in transportation have led to wasted resources, higher prices for consumers, and missed opportunities for industrial growth.

Expanding pipeline infrastructure would create thousands of construction and maintenance jobs, stimulate local economies, and facilitate the flow of natural gas to underserved areas. This investment in infrastructure would not only reduce costs for American families but also bolster economic activity nationwide.

Impacts on Security and Trade

Nowhere is the value of energy as a geopolitical strength clearer than U.S. liquefied natural gas (LNG). Increased LNG exports are key to reducing America's trade deficit and are a key competitive edge against foreign adversaries. The Department of Energy's (DOE) pause on permitting LNG exports was simply bad policy, and some real damage has already been done. Gas demand globally is at record highs and continues to rise. This demand should be met with supply from the U.S., not foreign adversaries. We appreciate you lifting the ban on LNG exports.

Increased use of natural gas is also a proven way to reduce emissions by displacing dirtier fuels, which has allowed the U.S. to lead the world in emissions reductions. Recognizing this, we encourage you to support legislative efforts to repeal the EPA methane fee.

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) implementation of the Inflation Reduction Act's "Waste Emissions Charge" misinterpreted Congressional intent, and does little beyond increasing the cost of production for American oil and natural gas. Some have estimated that up to 88% of Americans support increasing domestic production vs relying on foreign fuel sources.

Reforming the Project Permitting Process

The convoluted permitting process to approve pipeline projects is unquestionably the biggest impediment to delivering valuable energy to communities that need it. While permit reform is needed for all infrastructure projects, this is especially true in the natural gas industry. We need smart, comprehensive permitting reform that ensures transparency, consistency, and timeliness.

Unfortunately, the project permitting process has been weaponized by a well-organized and well-funded environmental community, which works tirelessly to delay and eliminate projects before they even start. This is an enduring problem where reform will provide the infrastructure needed today and in the future. DCA believes permit reform is especially needed with regard to two key statutes.

Clean Water Act (CWA)

Section 401 of the CWA allows states to review and provide input on permit applications to ensure projects meet that state's water quality standards. While the intent is to allow states to effectively regulate local land and infrastructure, in several states this has become a method to delay or create cost-prohibitive roadblocks to the development of interstate natural gas and oil pipelines. Reform is needed to ensure states do not abuse this authority for political issues.

National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) Reform:

NEPA mandates federal agencies to assess the environmental impacts of their proposed actions. In recent years, debates over NEPA reform have intensified, focusing on the balance between environmental protection and the need to expedite infrastructure projects, particularly those related to energy.

The existing permitting process is cumbersome and leads to significant delays in critical infrastructure projects, and these delays can hinder the timely deployment of technologies essential for reducing carbon emissions. DCA believes NEPA reform is needed to provide certainty regarding the timing and scope of environmental reviews.

Advance Pipeline Safety Legislation

DCA is engaged in the debate over reauthorization of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) and the nation's pipeline safety network. In the 118th Congress, two bills were introduced and advanced through their respective committees in the House, but failed to pass in the Senate.

DCA was particularly interested in the most recent pipeline safety reauthorization because of language that would improve state damage prevention programs. Pipeline mapping is an area that needs considerable improvement. Accurate mapping of underground facilities is essential to accurate and timely locating, and use of geographic information systems (GIS) is the most effective way to identify and document a wide range of data about the underground infrastructure in a given area.

Language to encourage increased use of GIS mapping and improved state damage prevention programs was included in the two bills mentioned above, but unfortunately, that legislation failed to be enacted in the 118th Congress for reasons unrelated to pipeline safety. While this issue is not likely to become a priority early in the 119th Congress, we encourage the Trump administration to recognize the importance of this legislation, and to support efforts to reintroduce the bill in the House and Senate as soon as possible and help advance it through the legislative process.

DCA stands ready to work with your administration and the 119th Congress to advance productive energy and energy transportation legislation this year, and we appreciate your consideration of our position on these important issues.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Darden', with a long, sweeping underline.

Rob Darden
Executive Vice President