

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 29, 2020

The Honorable Neil Chatterjee
Chairman
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street NE
Washington, DC 20426

Dear Chairman Chatterjee:

As the nation continues to respond to COVID-19, we thank you and the dedicated public servants at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for continuing the critically important work that you do.

While nothing will be “business as usual” for any of us for quite some time, the work FERC does each day to protect consumers, review and approve rates and evaluate certificate applications is critical to ensuring that our constituents – those who are abiding by stay-at-home directives, hospitals and other essential businesses – have access to affordable and reliable energy during and after the COVID-19 emergency.

As U.S. infrastructure operators take a forward-looking approach to addressing the current challenges facing our nation, it is imperative that federal agencies act to strengthen critical energy infrastructure so that energy suppliers can continue to deliver affordable and reliable energy to homes, hospitals and businesses around the world.

We have all seen that the commitment to the health and safety of workers, communities and the environment is the top priority for America’s essential businesses. The energy sector in particular has been committed to containing the spread of the coronavirus while meeting the nation’s energy needs. Even in uncertain times, we know that American prosperity and energy security are intrinsically linked, and that is why the energy sector is critical to our current response and will be key component of our recovery. To this end, the maintenance and development of critical energy infrastructure – such as natural gas pipelines and liquified natural gas (LNG) export facilities – is vital to the nation’s safety, prosperity and well-being.

We understand that there have been requests for FERC to institute a moratorium on the approval and construction of new natural gas pipeline projects and LNG export facilities for the duration of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)-declared emergency. We agree that public engagement in FERC proceedings remains a critical component in the infrastructure approval process, but a moratorium is both unnecessary and detrimental to the nation's energy security. During this period, FERC should move forward, as health and safety constraints may allow, with all applications for review of natural gas intrastate pipelines and LNG facilities while embracing new forms of public engagement.

Public engagement in FERC proceedings remains a critical component in the infrastructure approval process and should proceed unimpeded. Like other agencies, FERC has taken steps to protect the health of its employees and the public by hosting virtual public hearings and forums – but government oversight cannot grind to a halt. FERC should work to guarantee that public input and dialogue mirrors the digital workflow of other sectors, so that U.S. infrastructure operators can continue to produce and deliver essential fuels.

Additionally, construction on previously approved projects should continue, as Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines and state-by-state directives allow. Delaying completion would not only affect this critical infrastructure vital to meeting forecasted energy demand but also contribute to significant job losses. At a time when millions of Americans are temporarily unemployed, FERC should not add to these staggering unemployment rolls by blocking development that will employ thousands of people, generate new state and local tax revenue, and create billions of dollars in capital expenditures.

Existing projects have already been incorporated into our future energy mix, and end users are eager to realize the advantages of abundant and low-cost energy supplied by these pipelines and facilities—advantages that benefit all Americans. The natural gas industry is resilient, and, given available infrastructure, will be ready to accelerate the nation's economy when the world emerges from this crisis.

Natural gas currently makes up about one-third of American energy consumption, that share is expected to rise 17% through 2050, according to the Energy Information Administration's (EIA) Annual Energy Outlook – major growth areas include industrial (37% growth; 4Tcf), commercial (9% growth; 0.3 Tcf) and electricity (9% growth; 1 Tcf). While there may be short-term dampening of demand caused by the global health crisis, the long-term outlook for domestic natural gas utilization remains strong.

Natural gas is an integral component of the U.S. energy mix, and one that has significant environmental benefits. Importantly, the transition from coal to natural gas in the U.S. has led to almost one gigaton of emissions reductions since the year 2000. With increasing exports of LNG, the U.S. is able to enable our international trading partners to make similar reductions in their carbon footprints, and to encourage the use of gas rather than coal throughout the developing world—an effort that is essential to meeting shared environmental and emissions goals in the future.

FERC has always ensured that the U.S. can meet its energy demands, and these conditions should not deter the agency from continuing to fulfill its core mission. FERC should, therefore, continue to process, review and approve projects in a manner consistent with regular business, rejecting the calls for a moratorium on these critical energy infrastructure projects.

While these are incredibly challenging times, we urge FERC to take the necessary steps to protect the health and safety of the energy workforce while delivering the affordable and reliable energy to solve our immediate challenges and prepare for the future.

Sincerely,



Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress



Bill Johnson
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
Member of Congress



Bill Flores
Member of Congress



Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress