Glen Besa testimony (Environmental)

I’ll start by thanking of our judges, Lois Gibbs, Dr. Adrienne Hollis and James Igo for your endurance here. Appreciate that very much.

I'm speaking actually as an individual though I’ve had a long career with the Sierra Club and fortunately I'd like to put this a little bit broader perspective. I had the good fortune to represent the Sierra Club in the negotiations with regard to the Paris summit on climate change and I'd like to share these climate impacts with you.

Let's start first by looking at what's going on here with these pipelines in terms of carbon. The FERC actually did estimate and the carbon impacts associated with these pipelines and the Mountain Valley Pipeline was about 48 million tons per year. The Atlantic Coast pipeline about 30 million tons per year. Just to put that in perspective because they found that that was insignificant. Currently Dominion generates by their own admission 40 million tons per year and the pipeline would add 30 million tons. That's a 75% increase in their total emissions. They don't plan to decrease their emissions. Obviously that's a real serious problem when you’re talking about climate change. I don't think that that would be considered insignificant but that's what FERC did.

But the problem is even much larger than that because as a practical matter we've got 19 projects according to the Oil Change International report just in Appalachia alone. Again, no effort by FERC to do any kind of cumulative analysis with respect to the carbon impacts on our ability to meet our obligations under the Paris Accord. The United States is actually a member, actually a party to the climate agreement even though Trump administration has indicated its intention to withdraw. But it's important also to recognize that the accord, while it's a critical international agreement in achieving global climate security, it's based on climate science and the increasingly dire predictions with regard to the kind of kind of catastrophic impacts of runaway climate change reflected in the recent reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, These impact human society and while many people here are rightly concerned with the local impacts, we need to look at this in the broader context of its impact on climate change.

Across Virginia we experience droughts, severe weather, Hampton Roads is particularly vulnerable to sea level rise. But even if you look beyond that you see that as a wealthy country we do a pretty good job responding to it although the poor generally are disadvantaged when responding to these disasters. But look a little bit further. Look to Puerto Rico and what's happening there. Look to Alaska where entire villages of Native Americans - indigenous people - are being relocated inland because the sea ice has disappeared to protect them from the winter storms. Look at developing countries. Just for example, the global south: Bangladesh. Ten million people will be relocated in the next 10 to 20 years as a result of sea-level rise. People who live right on the edge of survival, and they're going to have to relocate. This is a serious problem in terms of our commitments under the Paris agreement.

Our ability to address climate change and deal with climate science and it's interesting enough when you think about the immigration issues that become a hot topic, that the lead climate scientists for Bangladesh basically said these migrants, these millions of people who are going to relocate have the right to move to the countries from which all the greenhouse gases are coming. Millions should be able to come to the United States. If you look at what's happening in Europe as a result of the dispute in Syria which was in part result of severe droughts probably associated with climate change, 1 million people on the move trying to go to Europe has literally given rise to right-wing parties taking a lead - anti-immigration parties - and really a lot of serious problems here.

So in summary, the United States and the world cannot ignore the growing environmental and social disruptions associated with climate change. For wealthy countries with the financial and technological capacity to transition to clean energy there is no excuse and no justification for investing billions in fossil fuel infrastructure that will prolong our dependence these dirty fuels when we need to move swiftly to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions for our own well-being and our own security. It is in our own self-interest as a nation to reduce our carbon pollution. We call upon the people of the world, we call upon the United Nations, to condemn these actions of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the Trump administration that will increase U.S. greenhouse gas emissions in contravention of the Paris Climate Accord and the United States’ obligations under that agreement. Finally, justice cannot reach back in time to levy reparations on those of us today whose devotion to fossil fuel could consign future generations to poverty and insecurity. It is our responsibility - it is our moral obligation - to address climate change today by resisting and defeating senseless fossil fuel infrastructure projects driven only by greed and willful ignorance. Thank you so much.