

**Testimony of David Butterworth  
Business Agent  
Pipeliners Local Union 798  
Environmental Resources and Evergy Committee Hearing  
Economic and Environmental Benefits of Pipelines  
August 17, 2021  
Harrisburg, PA**

My name is David Butterworth I am from Clendenin, West Virginia and I am employed as a Business Agent for Pipeliners Local Union 798. I represent approximately 7,153 Welders, Helpers and Journeymen who build pipelines in the United States. My jurisdiction extends from Virginia to Maine and there are 984 members who live throughout the Northeast. Most of our Northeast membership lives in Pennsylvania and West Virginia with those numbers being 350 and 469 respectively. I worked in the field from 1998 until 2015 and was hired on to my current position in January 2016.

I came here today to speak about the economic and environmental benefits of pipelines and to give the committee perspective from someone who installed and welded on pipelines and pipeline facilities for 17 years. I primarily worked in the Northeast and I would say I worked in Pennsylvania more than any other state during my career. I personally saw the economic boom that the oil and gas industry brought to the rural towns of northeast and western Pennsylvania. Hotels, restaurants, campgrounds, laundromats and convenience stores are just a few of the local businesses that I saw thrive in towns such as Wyalusing, Wysox and Waynesburg.

The workers in the drilling and pipeline sectors make a good wage and they spend their money locally while they are living in these communities. Many pipeline opponents contend that these are temporary jobs and that they are not of any economic benefit. I dispute that because I worked for 17 years in the pipeline industry and was steadily employed the whole time. The pipeline foes also say the towns will see an economic downturn after the pipeline workers leave. An example that refutes that argument is Washington, PA. I saw the town before the Marcellus boom that began around 2009, and I have watched it grow into the bustling area it

is today. The same can be said for many other Pennsylvania towns that continue to prosper due to the economic shot in the arm they have received from the gas industry.

The environmental benefits of pipelines are well documented. According to the Energy Information Administration during the period of 2005 to 2017 U.S. natural gas production increased 51 percent and CO2 emissions decreased 14 percent. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation pipelines are the safest and most efficient way to move oil and gas, with pipeline incidents being significantly less than that of trains and trucks. The opponents are quick to point out that pipeline accidents happen. While I admit that this is a reality, I also want to point out that the accidents are due to an aging pipeline system and the old lines weren't built to today's stringent standards. Local 798 currently has 40 open prejobs in the Northeast and most of these jobs are in the maintenance sector. Continued maintenance and inspection are essential to the safety of the public and Local 798 members are currently working all over the country to make sure that these lines are properly maintained, and accidents will be avoided in the future.

Local 798's pipeline welders follow some of the strictest guidelines in the entire construction industry. Every time a welder goes to a job, they take a welding test before they are employed on the project. This involves making a weld that is cut apart and checked for deficiencies. If any imperfections are discovered, the welder is not allowed to work on the project. If the member is successful with the test, every weld they make on the job is inspected by x-ray or ultrasonic testing to determine whether the weld stands up to API 1104 code. On most projects if a welder has three rejected welds he or she will be terminated. We welcome these standards because we realize the public's safety depends on us. We also acknowledge the need to stay up to date with the ever-changing metallurgical procedures the gas companies put in place to make sure the pipelines are welded properly. Local 798 has a 50,000 square foot training center with 52 welding booths so members can brush up and stay current on the latest welding procedures.

I would now like to discuss grid reliability which relates to both the environment and economics. There is a current race to net-zero emissions in our country and I am in full support of that, but the sprint to net-zero will come with consequences if we go too fast. In April 2021 the Columbia University Center on

Global Energy Policy released a report that shows, “future continued use of natural gas for at least the next 30 years,” and “there is no quick replacement for gas in the U.S. energy mix.” New strategies like carbon capture and hydrogen injection must be developed to reduce emissions while the continued use of gas is necessary to maintain our existing quality of life. EQT recently announced in a *Wall Street Journal* article by Collin Eaton that they plan to “spend 20 million over the next few years to replace leaky pneumatic devices,” and they expect “that will cut about 80 % of the company’s methane emissions.”

Two recent events shed light on the chaos that can ensue if the grid goes down. The Colonial Pipeline attack by hackers had people running to hoard gasoline. If the event had lasted a couple more days, extreme disorder would have happened as I witnessed it beginning to start. The next event was the Texas freeze where all energy sources failed due to extreme cold temperatures and non-winterization of the systems. In this case the elderly suffered, many experienced dangerous discomforts, and once again we were teetering on the brink of utter madness due to a broken power grid. Pipelines are necessary for our society to function, to provide affordable energy to all and renewables cannot currently come close to providing total grid reliability like natural gas can.

In closing, today I have given my best effort to explain the economic and environmental benefits of pipelines and I pray that I was able to give the proper personal perspective of a proud union member who started out in this business with the goal of becoming a good welder who worked an honest profession and was able to adequately provide for his family. These days the antis try to make me feel like a second-class citizen at every pipeline hearing we attend. I will continue to make my voice heard because many of you only hear one side of the story. My job is to procure work for the betterment of my membership and hopefully today I accomplished that goal.