

Public Comment on H.51, H.175, H.214
April 22, 2019

Esteemed Legislators,

I urge every one of you to strongly support passage of the following bills.

BILL H.51: To ban new, large-scale fossil fuel infrastructure in VT,

BILL H.175: To ban the use of eminent domain to take land for fossil fuel projects, and

BILL H.214: To require the Public Utility Commission to consider groundwater contamination and leakage from natural gas projects before granting a Certificate of Public Good to build them.

We need these to pass because:

Public safety is a concern. Currently the expansion of Vermont Gas' ANGP pipeline is underway. The sections of this project which were completed and gassed up two years ago are now under investigation for a variety of safety and construction violations. VGS has not demonstrated responsible behavior in construction of the pipeline to this point. To allow further continuation of this gas infrastructure would be outrageous.

Climate impacts must be considered. To fail to take into account the atmospheric and oceanic changes caused by fossil fuel use is the height of insanity and irresponsibility. We are in crisis NOW. We do not have time to dither or delay immediate powerful actions on all fronts to reverse the obvious trends of catastrophic climate change due to use of fossil fuels.

Responsible action and basic decency require us to acknowledge the harm we inflict on others by allowing projects such as the VGS pipeline. The build out happening right now is for fracked gas-- brought to us from fracking sites on First Nations lands in Canada. Fracking physically harms those who live nearby, destroys water quality, and pollutes the land and air. To engage in commerce associated with behaviors that cause such devastating harm is reprehensible.

Regarding **eminent domain:** In order to defend property from corporate claim of eminent domain, it takes thousands of dollars in legal fees, and massive amounts of time. Private citizens cannot even begin to compete in the financial arena wherein these battles are fought; corporations have extremely unfair advantage. The taking of private land for corporate gain is unconscionable.

While eminent domain itself is rarely used, the **THREAT** of eminent domain is all that utilities like Vermont Gas need. Vermont Gas can and has threatened to use eminent domain during the construction of their ANGP pipeline.

This is an issue of landowners' rights-- climate issues aside.

Finally, the economics of continued investments in fossil fuel production are absurd. Generating short term, finite profits for the fossil fuel industries, at the costs of permanent, global scale environmental destruction makes no sense whatsoever.

Meanwhile, the juggernaut is bearing down on us – catastrophic climate change has already begun to have its way with us.

Promoting and investing in the myriad **new economic opportunities for renewable energy** is the only reasonable approach to fulfilling our energy needs. Our primary focus should be on encouraging massive research and development and immediately beginning large scale transitions to renewable energy systems. This is a far more sensible and sustainable route.

It breaks my heart to see legislative foot-dragging and out and out policy inaction on these issues when we need to be working with full speed on all fronts to end our dependence on energy sources that are robbing our children and grandchildren of a livable future with every tick of the clock. Please be courageous, take a stand – take every stand you possibly can – against continued (much less expanded!) fossil fuel use. This is such a nice planet; let's save some of it.

We don't need more fossil fuel infrastructure; we don't want it, either.
Please support health, sanity and a sustainable future.
Please pass H.51, H.175, and H.214. Overall, these are small steps, but in the right direction.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Jan Waterman
Plainfield