

Congress Must Strengthen Pipeline Safety Protections

July 28, 2026

Dear Leader Thune, Leader Schumer, and Speaker Johnson and Leader Jefferies:

Across the country, communities are being asked to accept thousands of new miles of dangerous carbon dioxide pipelines. At the same time, the administration has moved to reduce oversight, expand regulatory flexibility for pipeline operators, and prioritize faster infrastructure approvals, increasing the risks to communities. Instead of taking steps to rein in the industry and protect communities from the dangers of pipelines, Congress is moving forward pipeline safety legislation that leaves in place concerning regulatory gaps and staffing cuts and ignores practical safety standards for carbon dioxide pipelines. Congress must not move forward any pipeline safety legislation that fails to strengthen and protect communities from the dangers of carbon dioxide pipelines.

The incremental approach to pipeline safety that has emerged from various congressional committees fails to offer meaningful guardrails that will protect communities or ensure that first responders have the information they need to act effectively when a disaster strikes. Sending an inadequate pipeline safety package to the President while communities are being forced to accept new carbon dioxide pipelines and weakened oversight is an abdication of your responsibility as federal lawmakers and a capitulation to corporate actors who will profit off of [billions in taxpayer money](#) at the expense of public health and safety.

In January 2026, [PHMSA issued a final rule](#) that would save pipeline operators \$461 million annually by allowing pipeline operators to use an alternative compliance pathway rather than certain safety measures that would otherwise be required as more people live and work near pipelines. These changes will make communities more vulnerable to pipeline incidents as development expands around existing pipelines. [PHMSA also moved forward a policy](#) allowing pipeline operators to obtain special treatment for discretionary enforcement. In [April, PHMSA moved forward a sweeping package of proposed regulatory changes](#), which include various deregulatory actions relating to remote monitoring, pipeline maintenance, reporting thresholds, licensing qualification standards for pipeline welders, and even what qualifies as an incident.

We have seen an [unprecedented reduction in the federal workforce](#), which reduces PHMSA's ability to inspect pipelines, hold operators accountable, and respond effectively when pipeline safety issues emerge. [Currently, PHMSA relies on just 207 inspection and enforcement staff to oversee](#) 3.3 million miles of pipelines, 3,000 pipeline companies, 183 liquified natural gas plants, 396 underground natural gas storage fields, and 8,528 hazardous liquid breakout tanks. Congress should require and enable PHMSA to move in the opposite direction by setting clear safeguards for communities and strengthening oversight through an expansion of inspection and enforcement capacity.

Congress has had years of warnings about the inadequate regulation of pipelines to transport carbon dioxide pipelines. The [2020 Satartia pipeline rupture](#) forced evacuations, sent residents to the hospital, and exposed major regulatory gaps in emergency and operator preparedness as well as general oversight and regulation of pipelines that transport carbon dioxide. Following the rupture, PHMSA announced new safety initiatives and later proposed [comprehensive pipeline safety regulations](#) in January 2025, [only to withdraw](#) them after the presidential transition.

While some committee bills would direct PHMSA to issue carbon dioxide pipeline rules, requiring a rulemaking is not enough, especially under an administration that repeatedly emphasizes regulatory flexibility and reduced burdens for pipeline operators. A future rule without a regulatory floor would likely leave the same gaps that have made communities unsafe for years.

At a minimum, a pipeline safety reauthorization package for the agency responsible for regulating these pipelines should include the following meaningful carbon dioxide pipeline protections, rather than reliance and deference to inadequate industry standards:

❖ **Emergency Preparedness:**

- Require plume modeling and public disclosure sufficient for emergency response planning; and
- Public notification and first responder training, preparedness and response related to carbon dioxide pipeline rupture, paid for by pipeline operators.

❖ **Community Protections**

- Clear authority for states, Tribes, and local governments to keep carbon dioxide pipelines away from sensitive infrastructure, including homes, schools, hospitals, farms, and businesses, through consideration of safety measures such as setbacks and other land use controls; and
- Preservation of state authority to regulate abandoned pipelines.

❖ **Pipeline Safety**

- Cradle-to-grave tracking and accounting for carbon dioxide;
- Odorization requirements and other effective leak detection technology;
- Stronger rupture detection and automatic shutoff systems;
- Contaminant and water content standards to reduce corrosion and fracture risks; and
- Increased PHMSA staffing for oversight, inspections, and enforcement.

The pipeline safety bills that passed committees reflect the priorities of the pipeline industry and lack significant protections for communities living in the path of these dangerous projects. Congress has been warned for years; the next carbon dioxide pipeline disaster should not be another case study in missed opportunities. Congress should reject any pipeline safety package that fails to provide meaningful protections for the communities it is elected to serve.

Sincerely,

Original Signatories

AL Against CCS
Bold Alliance
Center for Biological Diversity
Climate Justice Alliance
Earthjustice Action
EarthRights International
Eco-Justice Collaborative

Food & Water Watch
For a Better Bayou
Institute for Policy Studies Climate Policy Program
Science and Environmental Health Network
The Raices Collab Project
Third Act

National Signatories

Bold Alliance

Center for Biological Diversity

Climate Communications Coalition

Climate Justice Alliance

Earthjustice Action

EarthRights International

Earthworks

Elders Climate Action

Food & Water Watch

Greenfire Coalition Writers' Forum

Healthy Ocean Coalition

Hip Hop Caucus

Institute for Policy Studies Climate Policy Program

Intheshadowofthewolf

Landelijk Netwerk Bos- en Bomenbescherming.nl

League of Women Voters of the United States

Oil and Gas Action Network

Oil Change International

Physicians for Social Responsibility

Progressives for Climate

Science and Environmental Health Network

Sierra Club

Syracuse Cultural Workers

Third Act

Unitarian Universalists for a Just Economic Community

State, Local and Regional Partners

Animals Are Sentient Beings, Inc.

Benicians for a Safe and Healthy Community (BSHC)

Biofuelwatch

Bold Alliance

CAHGP

CCA

Citizens Against Heartland Greenwashing Projects

Citizens Against Predatory Pipelines

Clean Energy Action

Climate Action California

Commission Shift

Covington County, AL Against CCS

Earth Action, Inc.

Eco-Justice Collaborative

EEEECHO

Empower Our Future

Energy & Environment Taskforce, Colorado Democratic Party

For a Better Bayou

Fossil Free California Votes

Fox Valley Citizens for Peace & Justice

Good Neighbor Steering Committee of Benicia

Greater New Orleans Interfaith Climate Coalition

Healthy Gulf	350 Conejo / San Fernando Valley
Illinois Coalition to Stop CO2 Pipelines	350 Mass
Illinois People's Action	350Hawaii
Illinois Water Authority Association	
Interfaith Climate Action Network of Contra Costa	
League of Women Voters of Illinois	
League of Women Voters of Missouri	
League of Women Voters Upper Mississippi River Region Interleague Organization (UMMR ILO)	
League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, Inc	
Long Beach Alliance for Clean Energy	
M_W & Associates	
Metro East Green Alliance	
Montana Environmental Information Center	
Nuclear Energy Information Service	
PCCAT Putnam County CO2 Action Team	
Peace Action of Wisconsin	
Physicians for Social Responsibility Maine	
Prairie earth volunteers	
Putnam Progressives	
RISE St. James Louisiana	
San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility	
SanDiego350	
Santa Cruz Climate Action Network	
Save Our Illinois Land	
Sunflower Alliance	
The Descendants Project	
350 Bay Area Action	