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Nelson County Residents Rally for Independence from Dominion's Atlantic Coast Pipeline

Friends of Nelson, a citizen's group in Nelson County, VA opposing the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, plans to rally in celebration of American Independence and the rights our founding fathers conferred on citizens, as well as protest the erosion of property rights this fourth of July. We will line Route 20 near Route 53 in Charlottesville between 8 and 9 a.m. on July 4th.

"Up at Monticello, they're having a naturalization ceremony today for new Americans. As part of that ceremony, everyone will recite the Pledge of Allegiance, concluding, "... with liberty and justice for all." We believe in those words," says Eleanor Amidon, an organizer of the rally. "But, what kind of justice is it when energy companies can trample on people's property rights? What kind of justice is it when they can pollute the environment with impunity, because the state agency that should inspect their operations is so short staffed that the energy companies are left to "self-inspect"? We live in a great country, and we must be constantly vigilant to protect it from neglect or abuses by all levels of government. We hold all politicians to the high standards of the founders of this country, and insist that the rights of the people be respected: Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness!"

Organizers particularly welcome Governor McAuliffe, a prominent supporter of the controversial Atlantic Coast Pipeline, to hear this message on his way to deliver the 4th of July speech to new citizens at Monticello. The Governor has retained his support for the pipeline's route, 94% of which is on private property, despite the threat of eminent domain facing hundreds of Virginia property owners. Dominion's intention to obtain property with or without owners' consent is clear from the lawsuits they've filed against property owners to force access to survey.

“Many people don’t realize that there are no legal or regulatory protections against using eminent domain for gas transmission lines for private gain or export of natural gas,” says Joanna Salidis, Friends of Nelson’s President. “The Governor’s support for the ACP indicates that he does not take seriously the harm done to property owners or communities by the government wielding the extraordinary power of eminent domain to benefit private interests. We respect the importance of the naturalization ceremony at Monticello today, and find the Governor’s participation ironic as he actively undermines cherished American rights.”

“We want the freedom to continue building our existing businesses unencumbered by politicians pipedreams about a ‘New Virginia Economy’,” continues Amidon.

George Washington proclaimed, “Private property and freedom are inseparable,” and indeed, the ACP’s threat to property rights is felt deeply by some newer residents to Nelson.

Dima Dimitrova is a resident of Nelson County who emigrated from Bulgaria. The ACP would go through Dima’s neighborhood in Nelson, despite the united opposition of the property owners directly impacted, the neighbors, the Home Owners Association, and the community as a whole.

“The greatest disillusionment of my adult life has been my recent realization that the average citizen of the great and powerful USA is not as powerful as I believed,” Dima states. “One of the primary reasons I decided to move to USA was because I believed in its System. I believed that if you are a good citizen, you work hard, you are loyal, you pay your taxes, you obey the law. In other words you care about this Country, then the County would in return care about and for you. Sadly, earlier this year, I realized that this all has been just an illusion. If the government can support and allow a private corporation (Dominion) to take away people's land and dreams, against their will, for no proven public benefit, then they are no different than the politicians in my native country, Bulgaria. I still believe in the American dream, I am living it, but the sparkle of the USA system has been tarnished for me. I now only believe in the power of the people.”

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