Issue

Call the Alaska delegation and urge them to (1) support completion of the environmental review of the Dakota Access pipeline and (2) support a process that is sensitive to the concerns of Native peoples affected by the pipeline.

Background

The Army Corps of Engineers this week granted Energy Transfer Partners formal permission to lay pipe under Lake Oahe, clearing the way for completion of the Dakota Access pipeline. Construction has now resumed.

Work on the project was stalled for months due to opposition by the Standing Rock Sioux and Cheyenne River Sioux, as well as a prolonged court battle between the developer and the Army Corps of Engineers that oversees the federal land where the last segment of the pipeline is now being laid. Trump last month instructed the Corps to advance pipeline construction.

Today, the Cheyenne River Sioux asked a federal judge to stop work while a lawsuit filed earlier against the pipeline proceeds. The lawsuit maintains that the pipeline project threatens water and cultural sights. The Sioux may also pursue a claim on freedom-of-religion grounds.

An assessment conducted last year determined the river crossing would not have a significant effect on the environment. However, the Army decided in December that further study was warranted to address tribal concerns.

The Corps launched an environmental impact study on Jan. 18, but Trump signed an executive action six days later telling the Corps to allow the company to proceed with construction. Legal experts have disagreed on whether the Army can arbitrarily change its mind because of the change in White House administrations.

In related news, Seattle yesterday (February 8) became the first major city to cut financial ties with Wells Fargo over the Dakota Access Pipeline. Council members voted unanimously to divest $3 billion from the bank as part of an ordinance dealing with city funds and ethical banking standards.

Call to action

Call Lisa Murkowski’s office at 202-224-6665 (if you can’t get through after multiple tries, try her Anchorage number, 907-271-3735). Send a follow-up email to Chelsea\_Holt@Murkowski.senate.gov.

Call Dan Sullivan at 202-224-3004 (his Anchorage number is 907-271-5915) and go through this same process. Send a follow up email to Alex\_Schenck@Sullivan.senate.gov.

Call Don Young at 202-225-5765 (his Anchorage number is 271-5978). Send a follow-up email to Michael.DeFilippis@mail.house.gov.

Also consider divesting from Wells Fargo and telling them why.

Talking point

I understand that the senator [congressman] has supported construction of the Dakota Access pipeline but I believe the Trump Administration may have acted outside its legal authority by halting the Army Corps of Engineers environmental review without providing any valid basis for doing so. I also believe the way the administration is pushing the project forward shows no sensitivity to the concerns of Native peoples affected by the pipeline. Is the senator [congressman] going to stand up for Native peoples and demand that the administration complete its environmental review and take into account Native concerns before pushing ahead with the pipeline?