

Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

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March 23, 2018

Sent via email and the US Postal Service

The Honorable Ralph Northam
Governor of Virginia
PO Box 1475
Henrico, VA 23233

Dear Governor Northam:

On behalf of Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL), I write to urge you to protect Virginia communities from security firms representing the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) and Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP). The oil and gas industry's activities to oppress opposition and sway opinion are well documented. For example, in North Dakota, peaceful water protectors were shot with rubber bullets, sprayed with water cannons in sub-zero temperatures and had dogs set on them.

Private security operatives have been and continue to be active in counties along the path of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP). A speaker who identified himself as Dominion security at a meeting in North Carolina described his trip to Standing Rock, North Dakota, and then proceeded to tell the attendees that Dominion was "monitoring potential resistance, including local opposition" to the ACP. The implications were clear, and his further comments were a not-so-subtle attempt to paint local opponents as "radicals"—local citizens like the teachers, farmers, ministers, firefighters, doctors, parents and grandparents throughout the counties targeted by the ACP. Undoubtedly, MVP private security practices are similar.

During peaceful protests, far from the pipeline route and held far from property the proposed ACP or MVP might lay claim to, security operatives have taken photographs of the opposition without their permission. At public hearings private security firms have been observed photographing people who spoke in opposition to the pipelines. Private security was also observed taking pictures of the license plates of opposition members' vehicles, not only at public meetings, but at meetings of grassroots groups held on private property. Finally, some opposition members have been followed as they made their way home. This kind of activity is clearly an attempt to intimidate.

Governor Northam, it is up to you to make it clear to the ACP and MVP this kind of behavior is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Please advise us as to actions you will take to protect Virginians and our communities from harassment and intimidation by mercenaries working on behalf of pipeline companies.

Sincerely,

Sharon Ponton
Stop the Pipelines Campaign Coordinator

CC: The Honorable Mark Herring
Attorney General of Virginia
202 North Ninth Street
Richmond, VA 23219