

**Cook Inlet Keeper National Pipeline Reform Coalition  
NRDC SAFE Bellingham US PIRG**

June 10, 2002

The Honorable Billy Tauzin  
The Honorable John Dingell  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressmen:

Thank you very much for your thoughtful efforts developing the Dingell-Tauzin Amendment in the Nature of a Substitute to H.R. 3609, which will undergo markup on June 11 in the Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality, three years and one day after the Bellingham, Washington pipeline tragedy killed three youths. As representatives of lead environmental and safety organizations focused on pipeline safety, we have reviewed many bills over the years and have provided much input to staff on Capitol Hill. The Dingell-Tauzin Amendment, which we understand is a negotiated compromise, is the first bill in the House in recent years with both a good chance of passage and provisions that incrementally improve pipeline safety and environmental protection without any simultaneous backsliding on these issues.

The Dingell-Tauzin Amendment is far superior to the Amendment to H.R. 3609 passed by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on May 22, 2002. Dingell-Tauzin does not contain a provision in the Transportation bill that we strongly oppose: pipeline repair permitting (or, "streamlining") language that eviscerates the permitting authorities of federal environmental agencies. Dingell-Tauzin also contains some improvements and additions compared to the Transportation bill in the areas of enforcement (i.e., higher penalties and a greater role in enforcement by the US Department of Justice), technical assistance to communities, increased funding for the Office of Pipeline Safety and state pipeline officials, and public right-to-know (though it's still unclear which operational and performance data will be provided to the public in lieu of pipeline operating permits, so this provision still requires strengthening). Last, the pipeline repair permitting provision in Dingell-Tauzin offers the protections needed to ensure that pipeline safety and environmental protection are not placed in conflict.

Due to the lack of critical public oversight and release liability provisions in Dingell-Tauzin, however, we are uncertain that the bill will achieve its desired goal of improved pipeline safety. Nevertheless, we want to continue to work with Congress to pass the strongest possible pipeline safety bill with no provisions that backslide on safety and environmental protection. Again, thanks to you and your respective staffs for your hard work on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Lois Epstein, P.E.  
Cook Inlet Keeper (Anchorage, AK)

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cc: The Honorable Joe Barton  
The Honorable Rick Boucher  
The Honorable Don Young  
The Honorable James L. Oberstar  
The Honorable Thomas E. Petri  
The Honorable Rick Larsen