

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

R. BRUCE JOSTEN
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

1615 H STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20062-2000
202/463-5310

July 2, 2013

The Honorable Fred Upton
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Henry Waxman
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ed Whitfield
Chairman
Energy and Power Subcommittee
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bobby Rush
Ranking Member
Energy and Power Subcommittee
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Upton and Whitfield and Ranking Members Waxman and Rush:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing the interests of more than three million businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions, as well as state and local chambers and industry associations, and dedicated to promoting, protecting, and defending America's free enterprise system, strongly supports H.R. 1900, the "Natural Gas Pipeline Permitting Reform Act," which would serve as an important tool to ensure that adequate natural gas pipeline capacity is licensed, permitted, and approved under federal law in a timely manner. This bill would serve to support the nation's abundant natural gas resources, as well as the increasing manufacturing, transportation, and electric power generation uses for natural gas and the concomitant demands these activities place on our natural gas pipeline network.

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPA 2005) granted the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) the authority to establish a schedule for other federal agencies to issue the permits necessary to site new natural gas pipelines. Unfortunately, the associated EPA 2005 provisions do not provide FERC with the ability to enforce upon other agencies the decisional deadlines set forth with respect to applications to site new natural gas pipeline capacity. Therefore, the timelines established by FERC have not, in practice, facilitated the timely permitting of necessary new natural gas pipeline infrastructure.

H.R. 1900 would address the shortcomings of the reforms set forth in EPA 2005 by providing FERC with the authority to enforce natural gas pipeline permit deadlines upon other federal agencies. Specifically, H.R. 1900 would establish a ninety-day review period for affected reviewing agencies, with the potential for a thirty-day extension of that time period in certain instances. This reasonable timeline would commence upon FERC's completion of its review of the project – and issuance of the associated environmental impact statement or

environmental assessment – pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. In the event that a reviewing agency would fail to take action on a permit request by the expiration of the associated review period, the permit would be deemed approved. Consistent with the Congressional intent manifested in the associated pipeline siting provisions of EPAAct 2005, H.R. 1900 would ensure that permitting decisions are made in a timely manner.

The abundant natural gas resources that are now accessible through advanced exploration and technology have positively transformed the global energy posture of America and have also been a driving factor of a gradual economic recovery at both the national and local levels. In order to continue this positive economic growth, the timely permitting and construction of new natural gas pipeline capacity is essential to spur economic development and maintain the reliability of an electric power grid that is becoming increasingly dependent upon natural gas as a fuel source. H.R. 1900 is therefore not merely an infrastructure bill, but also an economic development and energy security bill.

The Chamber strongly supports H.R. 1900, and applauds the committee for its leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Bruce Josten", written in a cursive style.

R. Bruce Josten

cc: Members of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce