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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

VICE CHAIR — SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME,
TERRORISM, AND HOMELAND SECURITY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CONSTITUTION, CIVIL
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**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
AND REFORM**

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AND CONSUMER
POLICY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

November 17, 2021

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20426

Dear Chairman and Commissioners:

I write with deep frustration about the unfolding crisis regarding Spire Inc. and its Spire STL Pipeline. Many of my constituents have reached out to me concerned that the company may be misinforming them in a campaign that threatens the health, safety, and livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of St. Louis residents. When I was sworn in as the U.S. Representative for Missouri's First District, I promised to do the absolute most for everyone in St. Louis, starting with those who have the least. I know what it's like to struggle to heat my own home and shield my children from the harsh winter temperatures, and I am extremely troubled by the Spire STL Pipeline and the company's use of scare-tactics to frighten community members about whether they will be able to heat their homes this winter.

I am gravely concerned that Spire Inc. may be actively weaponizing the fears of our community members — many of whom are low-income individuals, families with small children and older adults — for their own personal gain and profit. Above all else, the people of St. Louis must be protected from interruptions in service, and it is unacceptable that as consumers with no options for heat and gas services other than Spire, their livelihoods are being held hostage ahead of our winter months. We urgently need robust transparency, oversight, and accountability.

On November 4th, Spire Inc. sent out a message to hundreds of thousands of customers warning of the unreliability of their new gas infrastructure this winter.¹ My office has since received extremely worrisome inquiries from residents that Spire's message has led many to fear for their family's safety during the harsh winter temperatures. People with limited mobility fear they will have nowhere safe to go during the winter months should their heating be cut off. People are afraid for their lives. If Spire Inc. is deliberately provoking widespread fear instead of directing all efforts to preventing service interruptions, that would be tantamount to corporate malpractice.

¹ "Spire Called to Answer Questions about STL Pipeline | Ksdk.Com." Accessed November 12, 2021. <https://www.ksdk.com/article/news/local/spire-customers-really-danger-losing-service/63-f1fa79b9-c09b-4c18-859e-914704000206>.

Over the past week, Spire Inc. has continued its media campaign throughout my district, including by placing [radio spots](#) that blame “[Washington] D.C.” for potential upcoming interruptions in service. What the company failed to mention in their message is that their decision to build this pipeline was struck down by the courts, in part because of concerns of “self-dealing” profit motives that fit with the persistent concerns expressed by my constituents that the company may be using its monopoly to prioritize profits over the people of St. Louis.

Residents across St. Louis are struggling to understand why FERC approved an unnecessary pipeline in the first place when energy demand and prices in St. Louis have both been stable.² The DC Circuit Court reviewed FERC’s approval process of the pipeline and found “serious deficiencies.”³ We need both FERC and Spire Inc. to take responsibility and step up to protect consumers. I join my elected colleagues at the local level to not only demand answers and accountability, but also to demand that Spire Inc. immediately issue a public correction of the decontextualized November 4th email for all its customers.

Additionally, I am requesting that the Commission immediately launch an investigation into the pipeline and associated potential outages and environmental impacts to ensure that not one single household loses service this winter. Moreover, I am determined to make sure that a similar manufactured crisis never happens again. To that end, we need the Commission to gather data and set conditions to ensure our community is not taken advantage of ever again. The people of St. Louis need answers to the following questions:

1. What conditions is FERC setting to ensure reliable service is not interrupted?
2. What steps is FERC taking to ensure Spire Inc. does not transfer any further capacity to their gas pipeline?
3. A report from the Missouri Public Service Commission earlier this year found that Spire Inc. has shut off 30,655 customers for late payment since January 2021, and 61,428 customers since the start of the pandemic. Given this information, what actions is FERC undertaking to gather data from the company on potential shutoffs this winter and any contingency plans that might be in place?
4. Natural gas is a fossil fuel that is exacerbating the climate crisis and polluting our communities.⁴ A recent report showed gas infrastructure has been linked to elevated cancer risks for one million Black Americans.⁵ Will the Commission commit to conducting a complete environmental review for the Spire STL Pipeline, including the impact it has already had on our community, land and water?
5. Will the Commission commit to conducting a comprehensive review of its own framework and process to ensure that the proper analysis is completed before projects are built?

² Environmental Defense Fund v. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and Spire Missouri Inc. and Spire STL Pipeline LLC., No. 20-1016 (United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit June 22, 2021).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Science. “Natural Gas Is a Much ‘Dirtier’ Energy Source, Carbon-Wise, than We Thought,” February 19, 2020. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/super-potent-methane-in-atmosphere-oil-gas-drilling-ice-cores>.

⁵ “Fossil Fuel Racism.Pdf.” Accessed November 12, 2021.

<https://www.greenpeace.org/usa/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Fossil-Fuel-Racism.pdf>.

Going forward, the Commission should thoroughly assess whether a proposed energy project will in fact result in cost savings, reduced emissions, or superior, more reliable service, including taking into account the exorbitant costs of inaction on the climate crisis. In May, the International Energy Agency (IEA) stated that no new fossil fuel infrastructure should be built in order to meet bare minimum climate goals.⁶ St. Louis energy consumers should never be saddled with the costs of duplicative, unnecessary infrastructure.

We must immediately work towards taking fossil fuel infrastructure offline and preventing utility shutoffs for every person in St. Louis. These complementary goals are possible, and I plan to work tirelessly towards a renewable energy future where everyone in St. Louis and across the country is safe through all seasons.

We need everyone to stay safe and warm, and I am committed to seeing that through. If the pipeline must continue operating through the winter to ensure safety for our community in the short term, we must still establish guidelines and a roadmap for shutting down gas pipelines to pursue a pathway towards public, accountable, reliable, renewable power.

I look forward to hearing back from the Commission and respectfully ask for a response to my inquiry no later than November 29, 2021. Thank you for your attention to this important and urgent matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cori Bush".

CORI BUSH
Member of Congress

⁶ IEA. "Net Zero by 2050 – Analysis." Accessed November 16, 2021. <https://www.iea.org/reports/net-zero-by-2050>