

September 18, 2000

## VOTE "NO" ON S. 2438!

TO ENSURE THAT THE HOUSE CONSIDERS A BILL  
THAT WILL PREVENT FUTURE PIPELINE TRAGEDIES

Dear Colleague:

*The recent pipeline tragedies in Bellingham, Washington (three youths killed) and Carlsbad, New Mexico (12 people killed) called attention to a problem that will only grow worse if we do not strengthen federal pipeline laws.*

- From 1989 to 1998, pipeline explosions killed 226 people and caused billions of dollars of damage to property and the environment.
- The General Accounting Office (GAO) has found that the rate of pipeline accidents is increasing by four percent a year.
- The pipeline system is aging rapidly. Of 276,000 miles of gas transmission lines, 65,000 miles (24 percent) are more than 50 years old.

*For years, Congress and the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) have strongly urged the responsible federal agency, the Office of Pipeline Safety (OPS) of the Department of Transportation, to deal with the problem. OPS has not been responsive.*

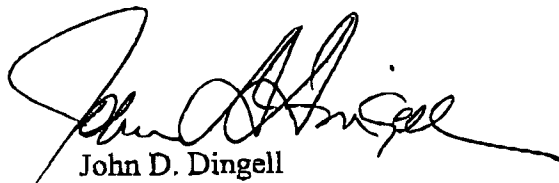
- GAO found that OPS has not implemented 22 statutory requirements, including 12 provisions that date from 1992 or earlier.
- OPS has the lowest rate of compliance with NTSB recommendations of any transportation agency.
- GAO has challenged OPS' new policies of reduced reliance on enforcement fines.

*The Senate recently passed a pipeline safety bill, S. 2438, that is entirely inadequate to deal with the pipeline safety problem.*

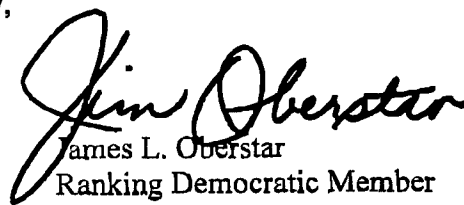
- The best way to prevent leaks caused by corrosion and other internal factors is regular inspections of pipelines with the best available technology. In 1992, Congress directed OPS to require these inspections by 1994. To date, OPS has not issued one final regulation requiring inspections. In fact, it has not even issued a proposal for inspections for key parts of the industry. The Senate bill continues this failed approach by again directing OPS to issue rules, and giving OPS total discretion on the frequency of inspections and the type of technology.
- The Senate bill continues to allow pipeline companies to establish the qualifications of safety critical employees by routine performance reviews, an approach strongly opposed by NTSB which believes that employee testing is required.
- The Senate bill fails to make needed reforms on enforcement and the public's right to information specifically related to pipelines where they live.

*There may be an effort to have the House pass the Senate bill (S. 2438) without amendment. We urge you to oppose these proposals. Bills have already been drafted and introduced in the House that are much stronger than the Senate bill. The House should go forward with its own bill.*

Sincerely,



John D. Dingell  
Ranking Democratic Member  
Committee on Commerce



James L. Oberstar  
Ranking Democratic Member  
Committee on Transportation &  
Infrastructure