



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #SPO-16-003

TITLE: Opposing Continued Operation of Unsafe Pipelines That Endanger Tribal Lands and Resources

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WHEREAS, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

WHEREAS, the inherent rights and responsibilities of tribal nations as acknowledged in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples include protecting our citizens and resources from harm as we strive to live in harmony; and

WHEREAS, millions of people, animals, fish, plants, and other forms of life depend on this water to survive in areas traversed, and in our native traditions we are charged with sacred duties to respect and live in harmony with all of creation; and

WHEREAS, tribal and other economies of these regions depend on industry, agriculture, and tourism, all of which would be negatively affected by the waters contaminated from a petroleum spill; and

WHEREAS, the Great Lakes in the United States Midwest Region represents over 20% of the surface fresh water in the world;

WHEREAS, the Great Lakes ecosystem has a profound effect on regional and global weather, and protecting these waters is both a sacred duty and a practical necessity; and

WHEREAS, nearly 64 years ago, a dual pipeline operated by Enbridge, commonly known as Line 5, was placed under the Straits of Mackinac to carry petroleum products across the Straits that connect Lakes Michigan and Lake Huron; and

WHEREAS, although this aged pipeline has not had a spill at the Straits, Enbridge pipelines of a similar age have ruptured and caused extensive environmental damages, specifically on the Kalamazoo River in southern Michigan (Line 6); and

WHEREAS, studies have shown that a petroleum spill at the Straits would be catastrophic for the health and economies of the entire region. Because of strong currents in the Straits, these studies have shown that in a matter of hours both Lake Michigan and Northern Lake Huron would be affected. Cleaning up such a spill is also subject to unknowns such as lack of knowing how to deal with spills in fresh water and how to deal with a spill under ice covered winter waters; and

WHEREAS, federal agencies such as EPA, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the US Coast Guard have testified that the current resources available are insufficient to deal with a spill from Line 5 in the Straits under good conditions, let alone in winter or bad weather conditions; and

WHEREAS, the Michigan Attorney General has said that if this pipeline were to be proposed today, it would not be able to get necessary permits. A large diverse group of local governments and organizations have joined in a growing chorus of voices calling for Line 5 to be shut down due to peril in which it puts the Great Lakes water resources;

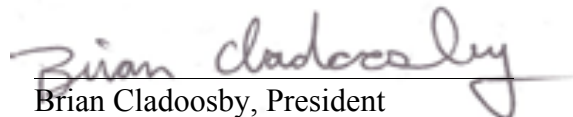
WHEREAS, a number of these aging pipelines traverse Indian Country, crossing through tribal lands, historic homelands, and area containing significant treaty and trust natural resources we depend on for traditional, cultural and economic uses.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that National Congress of American Indians strongly opposes the continued operation of the pipeline systems like the Enbridge Line 5, particularly the section that lies under the Straits of Mackinac, which endanger tribal lands and resources.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that this shall be the policy of the National Congress of American Indians until rescinded or replaced by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2016 Midyear Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Spokane Convention Center, June 27 to June 30, 2016, with a quorum present.


Brian Cladoosby, President

ATTEST:


Aaron Payment, Recording Secretary