

**Fellow citizens,**

**October 22, 2009**

There is a long history here in West Virginia of outside interests taking our resources cheaply. Our land, timber, oil, gas, coal, even our workers have at times been sacrificed at the altar of progress. We have been conditioned to accept bad decisions made for us by people we don't see that affect our lives. We go with the hope that these "deciders" have our best interests in mind. I don't know what you all think but it seems to me that those entrusted to think for us have not done a very good job. Maybe they need to stop thinking for a little while, sit this one out and be guided by well thought out plans that would make sense scientifically and socially for today and the future. Now we are facing the possibility of an ugly scar across our area in the form of a new power-line, this so called "path". This is a bad idea. In the future those that thought this proposed power-line was a good idea will thank those who thought it through, realized it was a bad idea and stopped it. The interests that would have us accept this degradation to our lands, our views, our health, and the health of future generations know not what they do. Our backyard is their backyard, it is America's backyard and is worth more the less it is altered. If West Virginians county by county, town by town made the informed decisions as to what is going to happen in their areas it would ultimately benefit our entire country.

Just because things have been done a certain way through the years doesn't mean that it is the correct way today or in the future. While this debate is ongoing maybe it is a good time to discuss energy policy and how electricity is produced and transmitted in this country. While it is not always the case, a large percentage of our electricity in the nation is produced at power plants a long distance from where it is to be consumed. It is then sent via transmission-lines to the consumer. A great deal of energy is lost in sending electricity long distances. There is no way that is a good thing. When there is a situation where the majority of a regions power is being transmitted via one power-line we have all of our eggs in one basket. Leaving us vulnerable not only in a national security sense through a possible terrorist attack on said power-line, we are vulnerable as well to catastrophic failure due to the actions of the weather or the Earth's crust itself. We have lived in a very mild and uneventful period of the Earth's history in this regard.

There is no need for haste as we've been told by our own governor that there is no immediate need for the electricity that would be transmitted via the proposed path. The need we are told is forecast for the future. There is time to move ahead with a plan that incorporates many ideas that those in power to this point have either forgotten about or have only been paying lip service to thus far, namely, conservation, and alternative energy. Unless and until all options are explored there shouldn't be a tree cut or a shovel full of dirt moved. There is time for those in Washington including our President to get their energy house in order. Don't ask us to desecrate and pollute our state until there are solar panels on the White House, a green roof on the Pentagon and plans in place for much more. Because time is on our side we as a nation have time to plan and co-ordinate. We can involve our best minds, not just those in industry who have a vested interest in making money but those who are really concerned about the long - term well being of our country and in formulating a plan for our energy independence.

It is time to speak of the non-transmission of electricity and the notion of sending electricity the least amount of distance as possible. Making it where it is used as often as can be. The electric grid is capable of taking in electricity from many sources. A truly smart grid is a diverse one. We in this country are just getting started and energy independence begins house by house. Maybe it is time to revisit the Carter era tax breaks to those willing and able to create as much of their own power as they can. Maybe it is time especially in rural areas like ours for small energy companies or independent co-operatives to get in the game broadening the playing field producing carbon neutral green energy. This would give people jobs with a future and stimulate the economy. An area like ours could be a non -polluting exporter of electricity. When it is time to transmit electricity to those areas of the country that need it, it could be sent by the already existing Power-lines that need to be upgraded anyway.

For those fighting this good fight I have a few suggestions. Try to get all the land -owners directly affected together and in unison saying no at any price. There is strength in numbers. Avoid cynicism. Cynicism is a luxury we cannot afford.

Combat the path propaganda on the air waves. Create your own commercials both for television and radio. Ask for equal time as their commercials could be considered political. Television is how you get

the attention of the everyman who in many cases has no idea what is going on or worse yet is  
misinformed into thinking this may be something good in the way of jobs or income for West Virginia.  
Compile lists of all elected officials up to and including the President, try to get a yes or no from them  
and if need be vote them out. Those that go along to get along are gone.

Thank you,

John Merrill