



## Operating Engineers Continuing Political Committee

International Union  
of Operating Engineers  
Local 478

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Good afternoon chairs and distinguished members of the Energy and Technology Committee.

My name is Nate Brown and I am here on behalf of the International Union of Operating Engineers to express our concerns over SB 332 – An Act Concerning Solicitation for Natural Gas Transportation Capacity.

The International Union of Operating Engineers employs over 20,000 workers throughout the northeast region. More than 3,000 of them, including myself, reside in Connecticut as members of Local 478.

We are part of the skilled trades that build our nation's infrastructure: things like the highways, bridges, buildings, and energy facilities we all rely on every day. This includes the pipelines and power plants at the center of today's discussion. To be clear: our members are not among the myriad stakeholders involved in the planning, financing, ownership, or operation of energy infrastructure. We are the skilled hands operating the cranes and heavy equipment that are involved in these projects. We are the people who get it done.

We all know that energy costs and, by extension, energy infrastructure are vital parts of the economy. It is widely recognized that neither Connecticut nor New England have energy profiles that are conducive to economic growth. Our state and our region consistently dominate the top ten most expensive energy sectors in the nation. These are not just statistics; they are an overarching and overwhelming reality facing our businesses, our residents, our towns, our workforce, and our future.

Section 16a-3j of the General Statutes, which is what SB 322 proposes to modify, sets forth a framework wherein the State can take significant and progressive steps toward managing its challenged energy sector. This framework draws upon the expertise and participation of virtually every state agency involved in managing energy matters, along with a variety of other key stakeholders. In addition to this noteworthy level of inclusiveness, it is also a highly transparent framework that includes an abundance of reporting and regulatory oversight. This framework provides Connecticut with a process for proposing, appraising, and implementing energy solutions. This process enables consistency, control, and, most importantly, safeguards over the many individual projects that pass through it.

SB 332 proposes to "hot wire" this comprehensive process by precluding interstate natural gas pipelines from the range of potential solutions. It does so first by preventing the state from

even considering interstate pipelines solutions, and then by preventing the state's electric utilities from engaging in such solutions.

In a state and region where electric rates are particularly detrimental to the economy, why would we want to (a) "hot wire" our comprehensive review process so it precludes potentially viable options, and (b) deprive our electric customers of the cost mitigation they so desperately need? We should let the comprehensive process vet the full range of options so the best options can be selected.

With respect to changing the process: If the E&T Committee is going to consider any changes, we respectfully suggest that discussions focus on ways to strengthen our energy planning capabilities, not curtail them. We would all be better served to ensure that the process:

- Is as transparent as possible;
- Considers a wide range of potential options; and
- Includes mechanisms to safeguard consumers from the implications of inaccurate forecasts and project cost overruns.

The IUOE believes in placing emphasis on implementing viable solutions, not avoiding them. To this end, the process should hold the selected projects accountable to deliver upon their claimed benefits. More specifically, it should have mechanisms to hold the developers reasonably accountable if they fail to deliver on those benefits.

Connecticut's energy problems will not be solved by "picking winners" or precluding projects that curry favor or disfavor with special interests. We need an approach that embraces solutions and fosters innovative thinking. SB-322 is not only unnecessary; it represents a subversion of the comprehensive energy planning that Connecticut needs.

In the spirit of transparency, I want to be clear that major infrastructure projects, like power plants or pipelines, create lots of jobs; many of those jobs are filled by IUOE members. Over the past two years, power plant and pipeline projects have provided good jobs to over 1500 skilled tradesmen. So we obviously like infrastructure investments. I also want to be very clear that we like *smart and prudent* infrastructure investments. We want to put our members to work on projects that improve Connecticut- projects that lower the cost of energy, projects that drive economic growth, and projects that create a safe and sustainable place for our families to live.

The IUOE supports a robust energy planning process that embraces a wide range of options and ensures accountability over the prudent execution of the selected options. SB-322 will accomplish neither of these things and, therefore, we oppose it in form and substance.