



N A R U C
National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners

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Michigan Commissioner Norman J. Saari Testifies on Pipeline Safety before House Committee

WASHINGTON—Today, Commissioner Norman J. Saari of Michigan testified before the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, on pipeline safety reauthorization legislation. Representing both the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners and the Michigan Public Service Commission, Commissioner Saari offered key stakeholder input to better inform the draft legislation.

Although NARUC does not oppose the bill, the Association does not support the draft in its current form, as it does not include crucial provisions necessary to improve pipeline safety and reliability. NARUC has recommended 10 crucial improvements to the bill. This includes requiring odorization of natural gas in all pipelines; elimination of outdated exemptions limiting safety oversight of gathering lines, requiring the federal government to allow interested States to also inspect interstate pipelines, and assuring that all State safety oversight programs are properly funded. The draft legislation should also be amended to ensure that State pipeline safety regulatory authorities can request that the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials and Safety Administration conduct design safety reviews.

“State regulators shoulder the responsibility of overseeing the safety and reliability of 84 percent of this country’s pipelines,” said NARUC President Travis Kavulla. “NARUC’s requests are crucial to assure States can continue to perform this vital function. We look forward to working cooperatively in this bipartisan effort to add needed improvements to this bill that can only increase the safety of our nation’s pipelines.”

The most recent pipeline safety law passed by Congress, the “Pipeline Safety, Regulatory Certainty, and Job Creation Act of 2011” included spending authorizations that expired in 2015. The 2011 Act included mandates for PHMSA and other regulations that are incomplete include leak detection and emergency shutoff valves, integrity management for natural gas pipelines, public education and awareness efforts, and accident and incident notification.

A copy of Commissioner Saari’s testimony is available at <http://bit.ly/21G5y1E>. The draft discussion legislation for the “Pipeline Safety Act of 2016” is located on the House website at <http://1.usa.gov/21G5wXk>.

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NARUC is a non-profit organization founded in 1889 whose members include the governmental agencies that are engaged in the regulation of utilities and carriers in the fifty States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. NARUC’s member agencies regulate telecommunications, energy, and water utilities. NARUC represents the interests of State public utility commissions before the three branches of the Federal government.