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Wednesday, June 8, 2020

Geri Huser
Chair, Iowa Utilities Board
1375 E Court Ave
Des Moines, IA 50319

Dear Geri,

I write to you today not in my capacity as the director of Bold Iowa, but personally, as a friend and former colleague, to ask you in the strongest possible terms to reconsider your decision earlier this year to allow the expansion of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL).

Perhaps some might consider it inappropriate for me to approach you personally, as opposed to “professionally.” Yet the stakes are too high for me not to appeal directly to your humanity. And with respect to Iowa Code section 17A.17, regarding ex parte communications with state officials, I have addressed that concern by making this letter public and cc:ing Board members Wagner and Lozier.

I greatly value our long-term friendship and the many positive memories associated with years of working together. As a lawmaker, you were an ally in my efforts to address urban sprawl, and I have always respected your integrity, intelligence, and willingness to dialogue.

When it comes to addressing complex legislation, you have always stood out. In a House controlled by Republicans, most Democrats were never called on to floor-manage important bills. If memory serves, you more than

any House Democrat were entrusted by Republicans to floor-manage significant legislation. Some Democrats grumbled that it was because you were too conservative. I countered that, while you might be out of step with most members of the Democratic caucus on some issues, Republicans entrusted those bills to you because they knew you'd do a stellar job.

As chair of the IUB, I watched you closely in 2016 and 2017 during debate on the then-proposed pipeline. Even though I disagreed with some of your conclusions, I was impressed with how many detailed questions you asked of IUB staff and attorneys representing DAPL. In fact, I heard observers note that you seemed to be the only Board member genuinely interested in digging into the details of the proposal. Again, though I disagree with your eventual votes, I respect that you took the process seriously.

Now, given the urgency of the climate crisis, I ask you in the strongest possible terms to revisit DAPL's recent proposal to double the flow of oil through its pipeline. I ask you and the Board to reject the company's proposal, because when it comes to transforming our economy in the face of climate change, time is short and the stakes are high.

How high? If you believe in science, as I know you do, the stakes could not be higher. Our lives and future hang in the balance.

Every reputable scientific entity — NASA, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the American Geophysical Union, the National Academy of Sciences, to name a few — concurs on the severity of the crisis, the urgency of the moment, and that the burning of fossil fuels is the primary culprit.

It is not an overstatement to say that right here, right now, our individual and collective decisions regarding fossil fuel exploitation, transportation, and consumption may well determine whether our grandchildren live or die.

Every week, some new indicator hits us with the hard reality of where we stand. Just last month, the temperature in one Siberian village hit 100.4 degrees.

Let that sink in: Over 100 degrees! In Siberia!

As The New Yorker reported on June 27, 2020, "In Siberia in late May, thawing permafrost caused an oil-storage tank to collapse, leading to the largest oil spill ever to occur in the Russian Arctic."

And as The New York Times reported yesterday, "Raging wildfires in the Arctic appear to be both an effect of global warming and a cause of future warming. The fires are releasing record amounts of pollution."

The escalation of climate change, coupled with the decision this week by Judge Boasberg to shut down DAPL, opens the door to a new conversation about Iowa's role in addressing the climate crisis. Geri, you are in a unique position of leadership and influence. It is no exaggeration to say that, at this moment, more than any other Iowan, you could have an immensely profound impact on the climate crisis.

I ask you in the strongest possible terms, please use your authority and information gleaned from these new developments to shut down this oil pipeline. It threatens our climate, our grandchildren's future, and perhaps the very survival of humanity. I am absolutely certain shutting down this pipeline is the right thing to do, and you are the person thousands of Iowans are counting on to accomplish it.

Thank you. Your friend and former colleague,

Ed Fallon

cc: Nick Wager and Richard Lozier