



**TO:** House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee

**FROM:** Lisa Schaefer, Director of Government Relations

**DATE:** 8/19/2019

**RE:** **CCAP Comments on House Bill 1568**

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Thank you for this opportunity to submit comments on House Bill 1568 on behalf of the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP), a non-profit, non-partisan association representing the commonwealth's 67 counties. House Bill 1568 would create a Pipeline Safety and Communication Board to coordinate information and communications related to pipelines among federal, state and local government agencies, and CCAP respectfully requests county representation and input as part of this Board.

Since shale gas drilling began rapidly increasing a decade ago, counties have raised concerns about the proliferation of gathering pipelines, particularly given the lack of knowledge on their location and ambiguity regarding safety oversight. In recent years, however, the buildout of transmission and distribution lines mean that most, if not all, counties, are now being impacted in some way by the expansion of this infrastructure. Although counties have significant resources to offer when it comes to planning for these pipelines, and can serve an important liaison role with the public, too often they are among the last to know what is going on.

In 2015, Gov. Wolf convened a Pipeline Infrastructure Task Force to make recommendations on how to engage stakeholders in a collaborative process around pipeline development. Counties had a significant voice on this Task Force through the County Government Work Group, which developed 12 recommendations that largely centered on communication and cooperation with and among county government, municipalities, citizens, pipeline operators, planning departments, GIS resources and environmental authorities. These recommendations demonstrate the wide variety of ways in which counties are a stakeholder in the pipeline development process to enhance the safety of our communities. The full Task Force report is available at <http://files.dep.state.pa.us/ProgramIntegration/PITF/PITF%20Report%20Final.pdf>.

County government is a valuable partner with other levels of government when it comes to pipeline activity. For instance, county emergency management agencies play a significant role in local emergency response planning, as well as the resources at the local level to provide critical response. There are excellent examples of county and regional safety task forces that could serve as a model for other parts of the state; for instance, the South Central Task Force is an

eight-county all-hazards emergency preparedness task force that collaborates and coordinates both public and private sector resources through planning, prevention, response and recovery.

In addition, counties want, and should have, more communication with operators and a bigger role in planning how pipelines affect our communities. Counties can often provide mapping and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data to operators, and want to make sure operators are using accurate maps and that state and local governments are using a common mapping picture, as it is critical that the location of pipelines is clearly communicated for planning and emergency response purposes. Likewise, county planning departments have a perspective on current and future development that can be valuable in determining appropriate siting for pipelines, potential for shared rights-of-ways and potential impacts on a communities' future. County conservation districts also have important knowledge of the landowners and the landscape and can offer important insights into erosion, sedimentation, streams and wetlands that pipeline operators may encounter during development.

Given the integral role that counties can play in addressing pipeline safety and communicating information, CCAP requests that county expertise from county emergency management, GIS, planning offices and conservation districts be incorporated into House Bill 1568, either as members of the proposed Pipeline Safety and Communication Board or at minimum as part of an advisory council to the Board. Counties want to be an ongoing partner as the oil and gas industry evolves, and would be able to provide meaningful input to the Board about how they can best provide accurate and timely information to the communities they represent.

Thank you for your attention to these comments, and please feel free to contact us with any further questions.