



Safe and Reliable Natural Gas

WHEREAS, In 2016, natural gas became the most common source for electricity generation in the United States. There are more than 73 million residential, commercial and industrial natural gas customers in the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, UWUA gas workers play an important role in providing the safe delivery of gas to our homes and businesses. However, safety concerns over our nation's antiquated natural gas distribution system must be addressed quickly and correctly; and

WHEREAS, Natural gas pipeline explosions and leaks in recent years have led to calls for tighter regulations on the industry, particularly when it comes to aging infrastructure. More than half of onshore natural gas transmission pipelines were installed before 1969. In the last decade, the majority of serious incidents on transmission pipelines have been caused by corrosion and by failures in material, welds or equipment; and

WHEREAS, The disastrous leak at the Aliso Canyon storage field in California prompted public concern about the integrity of gas storage systems. UWUA members at Southern California Gas, who operate and maintain the gas storage fields at Aliso Canyon, Honor Rancho, Goleta, and Playa del Rey seized on the opportunity to offer practical proposals to identify hazards and uncertainties and reduce the likelihood of future catastrophic leaks, failures and releases of gas; and

WHEREAS, The UWUA led the effort to implement the nation's first comprehensive legislation to reduce methane emissions from the gas transmission and distribution system. The law requires utilities and the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to develop comprehensive reporting of leaks, causes and emissions; to review existing operation and maintenance practices to see if they effectively reduce leaks; and to develop best practices for avoiding, reducing and repairing leaks promptly. The law requires specific improvements in patrol, leak survey and leak survey technologies; repair of leaks as soon as possible after discovery; and maintenance of an adequate workforce that is both numerically sufficient and possesses the needed skills and training; and

WHEREAS, Gas pipeline infrastructure and safety are under renewed scrutiny since the deadly explosions in Lawrence, Massachusetts in September, 2018. The accident occurred when a non-union subcontractor connected the low gas pressure system into the intermediate gas pressure system. UWUA members from a number of different gas locals around the nation rebuilt the pipeline and restored services in and around Lawrence, MA. To ensure worker and public safety, UWUA National President Langford dispatched the National Safety Director and two National Representatives to the area; and

WHEREAS, Despite the deadly consequences of inadequate gas system maintenance and infrastructure, investor-owned utilities continue to have a reactive, rather than pre-emptive, approach to potential safety issues. Too often, the money that ratepayers are charged for gas safety are diverted to profits, dividends and executive bonuses; and

WHEREAS, UWUA gas workers are often called in to assist in disasters and work along side other gas workers. Regardless of specific union representation, all gas workers face common problems and share common interests. The UWUA is an active participant in The Inter-Union Gas Conference, composed of gas locals throughout the United States and Canada. The UWUA, and six participating unions exchange new ideas and best practices on pipeline infrastructure, safety and benefits; and

WHEREAS, On the federal level, the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) is the agency charged with regulating the natural gas industry. A third of the advisory committee that reviews newly proposed PHMSA regulations represents the gas pipeline industry. When the federal Natural Gas Pipeline Safety Act was last reauthorized, a provision required that new safety regulations must show that the cost is justified by the benefits; and

WHEREAS, For the first time, UWUA has a voice at PHMSA. UWUA National Safety Director MacNeill represents our union and workers as a front-line voice on pipeline safety issues as a member of the Department of Transportation's new Voluntary Information-Sharing Working Group. This committee makes recommendations to the Secretary of Transportation on pipeline information systems, encourages the exchange of pipeline inspection information and best practices for the protection of proprietary and security-sensitive information; and

WHEREAS, Through P4A training and apprenticeship programs, we are ensuring that our members work safer while rebuilding our gas infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, As demand has grown, our nation is in desperate need of additional gas pipelines. Insufficient pipelines in the six New England states, New York, and California have resulted in much higher energy costs, and concerns over electric reliability in periods of high demand. It is also a matter of energy independence. Inadequate pipeline capacity has resulted in the importation of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Russia and Trinidad and Tobago — rather than Pennsylvania or Texas.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, The UWUA calls on state utility regulators to exercise stronger oversight, and calls on UWUA affiliates to engage in state legislative and regulatory proceedings to improve gas safety and reliability on behalf of workers and the public; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, The UWUA calls on PHMSA to; pass new safety regulations, including requirements for automated remote shut-off valve placement and performance on transmission pipelines; repeal redundant and excessive cost-benefit requirements; increase civil and criminal penalties; and pass rules to reduce methane emissions; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, Building up our pipeline infrastructure will create jobs, grow our economy, and improve America's energy security. The UWUA supports Trump administration executive orders to remove regulatory impediments to natural gas transport and to speed up the permitting process for interstate pipelines and related infrastructure. The UWUA calls on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to streamline and speed up the approval process for new pipeline construction.