



Committee Members

Carl Weimer, Chair • Katie Hansen, Vice Chair
Chuck Mosher • Duane Henderson • George Hills
Grant Jensen • Jim Clark • Ken Thomas • Leo Bowman
Nate Moxley • Pete Kmet • Richard Kuprewicz • Shirley Olson

Washington State Citizens Committee on Pipeline Safety

February 4, 2005

The Honorable Erik Poulsen, Chair
Senate Water, Energy & Environment Committee
219 John A. Cherberg Building
Olympia, WA 98504-0466

Dear Chairman Poulsen:

Re: Support of SB 5456 - Making it a crime to excavate without notification near a transmission pipeline

We would like to take this opportunity to tell you of this Committee's support of Senate Bill 5456. For the past four years the Governor appointed Washington State Citizen Committee on Pipeline Safety has remained well informed and actively involved in pipeline safety issues throughout Washington State. This committee is unique in the entire nation, and we take our responsibility to provide advice to various pipeline safety stakeholders seriously.

Our committee has discussed many times the need for greater awareness and enforcement of this State's one number locator service laws. Damage to pipelines by third parties, including building and landscape contractors, other utilities, and residents, remains one of the most common sources of pipeline failures in the nation. In 2004 alone the federal Office of Pipeline Safety reports more than \$14,000,000 in property damage from third party incidents to pipelines. Not only does such damage cost money, it also puts public safety and environmental health at risk, and has led to huge economic disruptions that are not accounted for in the damage statistics.

Pending federal rules will soon require pipeline companies throughout Washington to expand their educational outreach to those who live and work near pipelines to increase their knowledge of how to safely coexist with the pipelines in their midst. This educational outreach is vital to reducing third party damage. Our committee also believes that the State has a responsibility to adequately enforce the one number locator law to send a clear message to those who choose to ignore this simple system thereby putting the public and environment at risk.

Senate Bill 5456, along with the increased educational efforts from the pipeline companies, is a needed step to better ensure public safety. For these reasons our committee has voted to support this bill, and ask that the Senate Water, Energy & Environment Committee give this bill a "do pass" recommendation.

Sincerely,

Carl Weimer, Chair

cc. Richard Rodger, Coordinator/Counsel