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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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Donald Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500-0003

Dear Mr. President,

Now that you have taken action to expedite the review of – and have signaled your support for – the completion of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) – I am writing to request immediate federal support for North Dakota law enforcement agencies that have been engaged in addressing ongoing protest activities related to its construction.

North Dakota state and local law enforcement have been managing the response to the protest activities and events related to the protests in the surrounding area for several months now – and at significant cost to state and local departments and governments. After five months of protests and over 600 arrests related to those protests, state and local law enforcement agencies are in need of financial assistance and additional manpower in order to continue to ensure public safety.

Since August 2016, North Dakota law enforcement agencies have worked non-stop to maintain the safety of local communities and residents, ranchers, and DAPL protesters. The federal government is responsible for the repeated delays, lack of transparency and certainty concerning decisions related to the pipeline easement under Lake Oahe, and the continued presence of protesters on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) land. All of which have contributed greatly to – and in some cases have escalated – the ongoing situation. While I commend the U.S. Attorney, U.S. Marshal, Customs and Border Protection and other federal agents in North Dakota for the assistance provided up to this point – the overall inaction by the federal government to directly engage on dealing with the protest situation that it significantly contributed to has burdened state and local law enforcement from across the entire state.

The necessity to rely upon law enforcement from across the state has led to personnel shortages statewide, cancelled leave, officers stretched thin, and communities throughout North Dakota wondering when their law enforcement will be returned to full-strength. I recognize the First Amendment right of individuals to peacefully and lawfully protest, however, previous events have concerned local residents and workers about their personal safety and damage to private property.

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With your decision to expedite review of the previous Administration's decisions and a signal that you support finishing construction of the DAPL, I anticipate protests will again increase. It is also important to note, the protesters' main camp is currently located in the Cannonball-Missouri River floodplain. Given the snowfall this winter, flooding – which is likely to occur in the spring given the conditions – can endanger both protesters and first responders, and cause significant environmental damage if the site is not cleared and cleaned. Thus, increased support for law enforcement is still needed to continue to ensure the situation does not become dangerous.

While I am requesting resources for future efforts, financial support is also needed from the federal government for expenses incurred as a result of the delays in the easement decision. Over the last several months, law enforcement agencies and state and local governments have spent substantial funds to maintain safety and security near the protest camp, the construction sites, and surrounding communities. Further resources were and are needed to respond to provocation from a small group of individuals who have not abided by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's call for peaceful prayer and protest. Morton County alone – a small, rural county where the protest camp is located – has already spent more than \$2 million and the state of North Dakota has spent over \$22 million.

The safety of residents, protesters, law enforcement, and workers remains my top priority. In order to achieve this, I urge you to provide federal resources to defray the costs already incurred and to provide federal funding and personnel to assist state and local law enforcement through the end of construction. Thank you for your prompt consideration of my request.

Sincerely,



Heidi Heitkamp
United States Senate