

**STATEMENT OF LINWOOD PARKER
MAYOR, TOWN OF FOUR OAKS, NORTH CAROLINA
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MAY 20, 2015**

Hearing on a discussion draft titled the *“National Energy Security Corridors Act.”*

Good Morning. My name is Linwood Parker, and I am the mayor of Four Oaks, North Carolina. All of you are leaders, and what you do is important. Like you, I’m a leader but in my small town of Four Oaks.

Let me tell you a little bit about Four Oaks, North Carolina. We’re located right on I-95 halfway between New York City and Miami. We take pride in our southern heritage, local merchants and business owners, and historic downtown. We have a strong sense of community, just like thousands of other small towns across our wonderful nation. I’m here today as the local mayor of just one of those small towns, but I hope you’ll let me represent all of them.

Four Oaks is located in Johnston County, in the eastern part of North Carolina. And, it’s important that you know a few things about eastern North Carolina, so you can better understand why I’m here today. Eastern North Carolina has over 1.4 million residents, and has added, on average, 15,000 residents per year since 2005. In 2013, the median household income was \$40,469, compared to the nation’s average of \$52,250. 20% of eastern North Carolina citizens were living in poverty, compared to 15% of the nation’s citizens. The number of new business starts in the region has dropped 64% since 2005.

Now, I don’t know the intricacies of this bill. But, what I do know, is that this bill will help quicken the development of future energy infrastructure, and will lead to a much needed increase in industry in towns, cities, and states across the nation. My town of Four Oaks is made up of truck drivers, restaurant workers, mill workers, auto mechanics, and many other honorable men and women, and they all have something in common. They want and need to be able to provide better for their families, and they want to see a better life with better opportunities for their children. It’s the possibility of the American Dream, and they desperately want their children to be able to dream like we’ve been able to in decades past.

In order to create these opportunities, we desperately need infrastructure. Projects like the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, and the work that you’re doing to safely expedite these projects, create a lifeline for communities like mine to grow and prosper. A type of growth and prosperity that Four Oaks, eastern North Carolina, and towns across the nation haven’t seen in years.

The people of eastern North Carolina have an immense amount of pride in their towns, region, and heritage, but that pride has taken a beating in recent years with jobs harder and harder to come by, and quality of life continuing to diminish. And we're just one example of that. There are other Linwood Parkers across this nation. There are other small towns in need. There are other regions of states and of the United States. We all desperately need a catalyst, and I believe that catalyst is natural gas pipeline infrastructure. And, in addition to providing much needed natural gas infrastructure, let's not forget that if we are going to continue to provide electricity to the nation, we need natural gas.

For eastern North Carolina, that infrastructure will come from the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. The increased availability of natural gas supplies in North Carolina will mean more jobs, lower prices to heat and power homes and businesses, and cleaner air due to fewer emissions from generating power with natural gas. It will save North Carolina energy consumers over \$130 million per year. It will create economic activity in excess of \$82 million in North Carolina. It will bring over \$1.1 million in property tax payments annually to Johnston County, where my town of Four Oaks is located.

What's more, at a time of economic restoration, the Atlantic Coast Pipeline will give access to natural gas to help our communities attract the companies and industries we desperately need to give the hope of a better future to our friends and families. I believe that increased access to clean, affordable, reliable, and domestically abundant natural gas will result in lower costs to families and help spur economic growth in underserved areas. This project will also bring much needed property tax revenue to the eight counties that it will run through, which will be helpful to create additional economic development and education opportunities for our local communities, including my town of Four Oaks.

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline is just one example of a project that can provide a wealth of opportunities in an area of our country that is desperate for them. But I'm not here today to focus solely on my small town or my state or this one project. I'm here as a voice for all small town mayors who are working tirelessly to bring hope and opportunities to the people they represent. The great people of the town of Four Oaks voted me into office, just like the great people of this nation voted you into this office. Your work here is so important because you have a chance to create lifelong opportunities for communities like mine, and many, many others throughout the United States.

I thank you for your time today, and for your hard work and dedication to our wonderful country.