

To: Minnesota House

CC: Governor Mark Dayton

May 19, 2018

Dear Members,

We are writing to express our strong opposition to SF 3463, an attack on free speech and freedom of assembly that would drastically increase “trespass” penalties, and impose long prison sentences and significant financial liability on those who participate in or who are deemed “guilty by association” in peaceful protest.

Bills such as these are designed to discourage political participation and curtail freedom of association. Everyone has the right to free speech and peaceful assembly, and existing laws are already in place to prosecute unlawful actions. These attacks on civil liberties are happening in states across the nation, led by industry groups such as the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) and abetted by oil and gas interests in response to growing public demonstrations against controversial fossil fuel projects.

The narrow focus of this legislation in applying only to a “critical public service facility, utility or pipeline” is highly revealing. Controversial infrastructure projects are far from the only public policy issues that generate mass mobilization, public protest and deeply felt political expression. However, individuals and organizations who engage in similar activities on other political issues would not be subject to the same standard of financial and criminal liability.

Individuals and organizations participating in peaceful assembly are the sign of a healthy democracy, and it is undemocratic for elected officials to pass laws that attempt to silence their own constituents. Minnesota has a long and proud history of people coming together to exercise their rights and make their voices heard. This legislation unfairly targets Minnesotans who choose to express themselves and peacefully assemble on certain, selectively chosen matters of public policy, and would put Minnesota in the national spotlight for criminalizing freedom of expression.

We urge you to oppose SF 3463 and show that Minnesota leaders value a healthy democracy.

Sincerely,

Sierra Club North Star Chapter
ACLU MN
MN350
Take Action Minnesota
Honor the Earth
Minnesota Nurses Association
SEIU State Council
SEIU Local 284
SEIU Healthcare Minnesota
SEIU Local 26
Jewish Community Action
Clean Up the River Environment (CURE)
Education Minnesota
St. Paul Federation of Teachers
Land Stewardship Project
CWA Minnesota State Council
Inquilinx Unidxs
Eureka Recycling
Women’s Congress for Future Generations
Growth & Justice
Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light
Lutheran Advocacy - Minnesota
Alliance for Sustainability
Council on American Islamic Relations - Minnesota Chapter (CAIR-MN)
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
Windustry
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha (CTUL)
Outfront Minnesota
Indigenous Environmental Network/Indigenous Educational Network of Turtle Island
ISAIAH
iMatter
Main Street Alliance MN
Indivisible North Metro
Vote Climate
Clean Water Action
Climate Generation: A Will Steger Legacy
St. Paul NAACP
Minnesota Environmental Partnership
Environment Minnesota
A.C.E.S.
Minnesota Native Plant Society
League of Women Voters Minnesota
Minnesota Division Izaak Walton League of America
Women’s March Minnesota