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# Another View -- Brian Chirichiello: Anti-pipeline rhetoric not helping New Hampshire

It's not surprising — but always a shame — when a politician adopts a position for political gain. Take for example Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, who just called the Northeast Energy Direct natural gas pipeline a “bad idea.” It's ironic that Sen. Sanders, who has never taken a position on a pipeline in Vermont, has suddenly become very interested in a proposed project in our first-in-the-nation primary state where he is lagging in the polls behind Hillary Clinton.

Unfortunately, Sen. Sanders isn't considering the hardworking men and women he professes to be protecting. It is a fact that New Hampshire's electricity prices are nearly 60 percent higher than the national average. These costs fall particularly hard on low-income earners who are struggling to pay their bills. They also place a heavy burden on businesses, limiting their ability to expand and create jobs, and impede broad economic growth.

Another fact is that New Hampshire families and businesses are being squeezed by high energy costs because of major constraints on our region's natural gas pipelines. The majority of New England's electricity is produced by natural gas fired generators, many built over the last decade to replace coal and oil facilities, and there is a direct link between tight gas supply and high electricity costs. Northeast Energy Direct (NED) is a proposed underground pipeline that will bring more environmentally friendly natural gas to electricity generators and New Hampshire homes and businesses, as well as create jobs and help bring down the cost of doing business.

Business groups and state regulators have recognized the chronic problems the state faces unless it has access to more natural gas, and the relief increased gas capacity will provide. The Business and Industry Association, New Hampshire's statewide chamber of commerce, has publicly stated that we are facing a “crisis around the supply and cost of electricity.” And the New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission has concluded that NED will save the region's ratepayers billions, yes billions, of dollars.

In addition to energy cost savings, the NED project also means jobs — good paying local jobs. In September, the New Hampshire Building and Construction Trades Council signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with Kinder Morgan. In supporting NED, building trade leaders cited the vital jobs the project will generate and the need for more natural gas to reduce the cost of living and operating businesses in

New Hampshire. Denis Beaudoin, business manager of IBEW Local 490 stated, “We need more natural gas transmission capacity to meet New England and New Hampshire’s energy needs, control the cost of doing business and create jobs. Kinder Morgan’s pipeline proposal is the most effective, least disruptive plan to increase the supply of clean domestic natural gas for all of New England.”

Additionally, the EPA administrator has repeatedly called for building additional natural gas infrastructure to power electric generation and fuel transportation fleets. The Obama administration itself has called natural gas a “bridge fuel” that will power the economy with less carbon pollution as the use of renewable energy expands.

Just this month, ISO-New England, the region’s electricity grid operator, issued a statement warning that “constraints on the region’s natural gas pipelines could pose a challenge to reliable operations.”

This concern prompted ISO-New England to institute a “Winter Reliability Program” to ensure the region has enough electricity.

The cost of this program is estimated at \$41 million and will subsidize plants that generate electricity using oil and liquefied natural gas. These are stopgap measures at best that will do nothing to lower sky-high electricity costs and could result in greater carbon emissions when generators are forced to burn coal and oil because of inadequate natural gas supplies.

Sen. Sanders stated he believes “climate change is the greatest challenge facing the U.S.” If that’s truly the case, then why doesn’t he acknowledge that natural gas is the cleanest fossil fuel available today, with half the CO2 emissions of coal combustion and only about 30 percent compared to oil.

We hope that before politicians go pandering to special interests, they remember the people of New Hampshire, who want to work, earn money and raise their families; not pay the highest energy costs in the nation. So please, before using NED for political convenience, we encourage a more thoughtful approach and realistic conversation about the project and its benefits to New Hampshire’s citizens.

*State Representative Brian Chirichiello is a Derry Town Councilor and a member of the Southern NH Planning Commission.*