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September 7, 2011

The Honorable Ray LaHood
Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave. S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary ~~LaHood~~ :

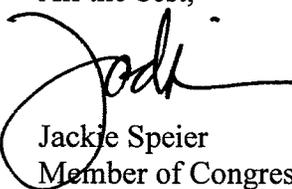
I respectfully ask that you not delay in the elimination of the grandfathering exemption that has allowed natural gas transmission lines installed before 1971 to be operated without ever having been pressure tested in the field. As you know, I represented the eight people killed last year by a ruptured "grandfathered" pipeline installed in San Bruno, California in 1956. I represent their survivors and thousands of others in my district who are demanding that PG&E prove its pipelines are safe. You brought much hope and instilled great confidence in the residents of San Bruno when you visited earlier this year. It would be a shame to have their government let them down.

The NTSB's nearly year-long investigation of the San Bruno tragedy prompted this lead safety recommendation: eliminate the grandfather exemption. The California Public Utilities Commission has ordered PG&E and other utilities throughout the state to test all transmission pipelines that lack pressure test documentation.

Unfortunately, the largest newspaper in my district is now reporting that PHMSA has a draft report that clearly does not reflect the findings of the NTSB report and its 39 safety recommendations. Staff at PHMSA have informed my staff that the elimination of the grandfathering clause requires further study. I understand you have yet to review the PHMSA document due for release next month. Please set the record straight and put forth natural gas safety policy that you indicated was on the horizon when you held a press conference in San Francisco in May of this year. The first step must be to require pressure testing of pre-1971 transmission lines.

While I will introduce legislation to eliminate the grandfather exemption, you can accomplish the same swiftly through rulemaking as you pointed out to me during your visit. I respectfully ask you to act now in the name of safety.

All the best,


Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

Cc: PHMSA Administrator Cynthia Quarterman

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