What This Outsider With Hidden Conflicts of Interest Can Learn From A Local About the Bayou Bridge Pipeline

Guest (/user/7139) | February 15, 2017

On February 8th, 2017, a retired Major General by the name of James “Spider” Marks spoke at a public hearing in Napoleonville, held by the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources regarding the proposed Bayou Bridge Pipeline (//www.desmogblog.com/conflict-cajun-country-bayou-bridge-pipeline-louisiana-standing-rock).

On the same day he also published an opinion article in The Advertiser that was highly misleading. It claimed that opponents to both the Dakota Access Pipeline and the proposed Bayou Bridge Pipeline are outsiders from other states. This is an interesting and hypocritical position to take, as “Spider” Marks himself lives in Virginia and is neither a native Louisianan, nor is he a resident of Louisiana; yet here he is involving himself and meddling in the affairs of our state.

This is a guest op-ed by Steve Wilkerson, a U.S. Army Veteran from Louisiana.
In his article [article](http://www.theadvertiser.com/story/opinion/2017/02/08/bayou-bridge-pipeline-bringing-safety-and-security-louisiana/97571802/), Mr. Marks falsely states that opponents to the Bayou Bridge Pipeline “are not native Louisianans, and do not understand the important role that energy infrastructure plays in the economy of this state.”

In truth, the overwhelming majority of opponents to the pipeline are indeed local and life-long residents who love our state, its natural beauty, and who understand the value of protecting and preserving the Atchafalaya Basin and our nation’s wetlands.

Local groups who are concerned include the Atchafalaya Basin Keepers, Louisiana Crawfish Producers Association, the Gulf Restoration Network, the Louisiana Bucket Brigade, GreenARMY, and BOLD Louisiana, among others. All are local groups that existed long before the Bayou Bridge Pipeline was proposed, and none of which account for the countless other Louisianans opposed to the project and are not affiliated with any group.

He then goes on to describe the proposed Bayou Bridge Pipeline as “a critical component of energy infrastructure, contributing to U.S. energy independence and energy security”.

Here Mr. Marks uses deceptive language, as the proposed pipeline would end in St. James Parish to be exported to foreign markets. This often used claim to justify pipeline construction in the name of “U.S. energy independence and energy security” is an obvious fallacy, indicating that we must have already reached energy independence if we are planning to export energy.

So then why would an outsider care about State decisions that affect us and go to great lengths to hide that information about himself?

The apparent answer to that is straightforward. Money.

Mr. Marks has misled the public by concealing his direct connection to both the Dakota Access Pipeline and the Bayou Bridge Pipeline, both from which he stands to directly profit. In the article, he represents himself as the president of an advisory firm he created called the Marks Collaborative, which is in itself not an untrue statement.

However, what Mr. Marks conveniently omits is his position of Advisory Board Chair to TigerSwan [http://www.tigerswan.com/meet-team/board-advisors/james-spider-marks/], the same group of private military contractors who have profited from the attack on peaceful protesters at Standing Rock and who have direct ties to the mercenary group Blackwater [http://www.desmogblog.com/2016/10/28/private-security-firm-dakota-access-iraq-afghanistan-blackwater] and the Nisour Square Massacre [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/03/world/middleeast/03firefight.html] in which 17 Iraqi civilians and Iraqi policemen were shot and killed and 20 other civilians were injured.

This connection illustrates TigerSwan's history of inflicting violence upon the innocent and unarmed, including unarmed Americans.

Following the use of trained attack dogs [https://www.democracynow.org/2016/11/24/standing_rock_special_unlicensed_dapl_guards] by security contractors at Standing Rock, North Dakota, that inflicted grave personal injury to, and violated the civil and human rights on unarmed peaceful protesters, the Morton County Sheriff’s Office launched an investigation into the dog attacks.

Their finding was that the canine security team was not licensed to legally perform security in North Dakota [http://bismarcktribune.com/news/state-and-regional/investigators-dog-handlers-were-not-licensed-to-work-security/article_4414ac82-191b-516a-bdd7-a4d0ff635247.html], and further stated that “TigerSwan Security is in charge of Dakota Access intelligence and supervises the overall security.”

TigerSwan could potentially position itself to profit from the Bayou Bridge Pipeline in a similar manner to its position with the Dakota Access Pipeline. The North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation and the Private Investigation and Security Board are also conducting parallel investigations [http://missoulian.com/news/state-and-regional/private-security-licensing-board-opens-investigation-into-use-of-].
Mr. Marks does not tell readers any of this. When Mr. Marks spoke in Napoleonville, he was quick to speak of his experience in the US Army and once again claimed that it was a matter of national security that the pipeline be built. Most ashamedly was when he tarnished the honor of his service and spoke in a manner that implied that he spoke not only for himself but on behalf of all veterans. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I reached out to native Louisianan Lieutenant General Russell Honoré (Ret) to ask him if he thought the construction of the Bayou Bridge Pipeline was a national security matter and if “Spider” Marks spoke for him as well. LTG Honoré was quick to respond saying,

“He doesn't speak for me. He is speaking for the company that hired him. Some of these guys...anybody with a dollar can buy them...the fact that he came down here [from out of state] and that he's on the board of that company that took care of the security there [at Standing Rock] speaks volumes that he will work for anybody and do anything. And it is not a national security issue. What's a national security issue is that we don't have proper regulations regulating these pipelines. That's the problem. They are destroying the Atchafalaya Basin because the pipelines are not being maintained properly...you have all these pipelines unattended in the wetlands that have allowed salt water intrusion because they are not being maintained and [sea-level] subsidence with wetlands loss. That's the problem I have with pipelines.”

So there you have it. A glimpse into the money driven, self-aggrandizing outsiders from out of state who are here to line their pockets at the expense of Louisiana and its citizenry. All appearances seem to indicate that they are willing to lie, cheat, destroy our state, endanger our citizens, subvert national security, abuse patriotism, and infringe upon civil and human rights to do so.

The only thing they have to risk are their own profit margins. What we have at risk is our cultural heritage, our way of life, and for some our very existence.

As a native Louisianan, there is nothing worth risking any of that. This is our home and we must protect it from those who would come in and profit at our expense.

As such, I implore the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, the Army Corps of Engineers, and any other appropriate regulatory organizations to disapprove the Bayou Bridge Pipeline for the sake of the real human interests of Louisiana's citizens, over those of outside corporations.

- Steve Wilkerson, a U.S. Army Veteran and a concerned Louisiana native who wants to stop outside interests from taking advantage of my community.

Watch James “Spider” Marks' remarks at the public hearing in Napoleonville:
Main image: James “Spider” Marks speaking at a public hearing in Napoleonville, LA. Photo credit: © Julie Dermansky for DeSmog
90% or better of those speaking against Bayou Bridge are Louisiana natives or current residents. Most, if not all, of those speaking for the project were outsiders or paid hacks like Mary Landrieu - selling out their state and its people for greed. Thank you Desmogblog and Julie Dermansky for accurately reporting on Bayou Bridge!
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