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November 12, 2019

The Honorable Tony Evers
Governor of Wisconsin
Room 115 East
State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

HAND DELIVERED

Governor Evers:

We jointly write you regarding Assembly Bill 426, which recently passed the Senate and Assembly with overwhelming bipartisan support.

There is no doubt that our state's economy and families depend on an infrastructure network to move and supply energy and water for transportation, heating homes, powering manufacturing, fueling agriculture and for providing the sustenance for survival. Unfortunately, we are seeing increased efforts by some to sabotage this critical infrastructure and harass the workers we depend on to keep it up and running.

In recent years, critical infrastructure worksites in the Midwest have seen millions of dollars of construction equipment set on fire¹, hydraulic fluid leaked onto the ground due to vandalism², intimidation of labor on worksites³, and individuals using force to break into facilities and unsafely turn off this critical infrastructure.⁴ Unfortunately, those causing this damage and disruption often either do not fully understand the harm they cause or simply don't care. Workers – usually skilled, union tradesmen and tradeswomen – are increasingly feeling unsafe and are seeing their equipment and even their own personal property being damaged. Attempts to improperly turn off or sabotage critical infrastructure is also putting our communities and environment at risk, and, in some cases, putting the lives of those doing the vandalism in jeopardy.

To address these serious and growing concerns, the Worker Safety and Energy Security Act (Assembly Bill 426) adds petroleum, renewable fuel, chemical and water infrastructure to the existing criminal statute protecting our critical infrastructure from trespassing and damage, giving these types of critical infrastructure the same protections as electric and natural gas infrastructure. Nothing in this legislation impacts first amendment rights to organize, protest or picket, and to make that clear language has been included to ensure this legislation does not violate those rights.

We view this as a commonsense proposal that merely corrects an oversight from when the Legislature passed its bill protecting utility infrastructure from these same types of criminal actions. This bipartisan legislation has support from labor, agriculture and business and we respectfully ask that you sign it into law.

Sincerely,

American Chemistry Council
American Petroleum Institute
Construction Business Group
International Union of Operating Engineers Local 139
Mechanical Contractors Association of Wisconsin
Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce
Midwest Food Products Association
Plumbing and Mechanical Contractors Association of Milwaukee and Southeastern Wisconsin
Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors' Association of Milwaukee
U.S. Venture
Waukesha County Business Alliance
Wisconsin Building Trades Council
Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation
Wisconsin Grocers Association
Wisconsin Independent Businesses
Wisconsin Independent Businesses Agri-Business Coalition
Wisconsin Industrial Energy Group

¹ <https://www.stormlakepilottribune.com/story/2360014.html>

² <https://www.duluthnewstribune.com/business/energy-and-mining/4459466-equipment-vandalized-line-3-replacement-site>

³ <https://www.liuna.org/news/story/extremists-target-dakota-access-pipeline-construction>

⁴ <https://www.apnews.com/c816b1cf8e1047f688fe349e2712d0f4>

Wisconsin Laborers District Council

Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce

Wisconsin Paper Council

Wisconsin Pipe Trades

Wisconsin Propane Gas Association

Wisconsin Railroad Association

Wisconsin Restaurant Association

Wisconsin Rural Water Association

Wisconsin Transportation Builders Association

Wisconsin Underground Contractors Association

Wisconsin Utilities Association