

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 28, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

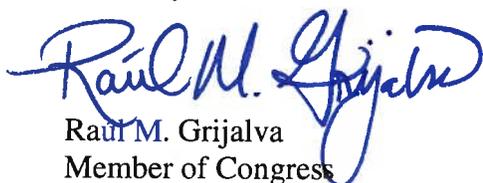
Dear President Obama,

We write to request an immediate meeting to discuss the closure of the Oceti Sakowin camp, the planned “free speech zone” on Army Corps land, and the shocking treatment of Water Protectors and peaceful demonstrators near the Dakota Access Pipeline site in Cannon Ball, North Dakota. On November 14th, we led 21 Members of Congress in a letter urging you to do everything within your power to deescalate tensions, including denying the easement for the pipeline to cross the Missouri River just north of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation and straight through its treaty lands, reducing the militarization of law enforcement at and near the site, and by providing official observers from the Department of Justice. Since then, headlines of mass injuries, frigid water being sprayed at demonstrators in sub-freezing temperatures, and of rubber bullets and similar anti-riot weapons being fired at peaceful, unarmed civilians, make it clear that this situation is only getting worse. Additionally, the Army Corps of Engineers letter announcing the closure of the Oceti Sakowin camp to demonstrators represents a concerning and disappointing course of action by the federal government.

We question the plan and reasoning given by the Army Corps of Engineers to close the Oceti Sakowin camp to the Water Protectors. The members of the Standing Rock Sioux and the hundreds of Americans who join them in opposing the Dakota Access Pipeline are constitutionally protected in their right to peaceably assemble. This pipeline endangers Native American sacred sites and poses a direct threat to their drinking water as well. We cannot allow the authority of the United States government to be harnessed in the pursuit of corporate profits at the expense of public health, safety and cultural heritage.

Given the dire images and accounts coming out of Standing Rock and the recent Army Corps of Engineers camp closure notice, we request a briefing this week from White House, Department of Justice and Army Corps of Engineer officials for signatories of our letter and other interested Members of Congress. The American people must feel secure in their constitutional protections, and as their elected representatives, we urgently need information on what actions are being taken to deescalate this situation.

Sincerely,


Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress


Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

CC: Attorney General Loretta Lynch, United States Department of Justice
LTG Todd T. Semonite, Commanding General and Chief of Engineers, Army Corps of Engineers
P.E. Colonel John W. Henderson, District Commander, Corps of Engineers