

RAUL RUIZ, M.D.
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November 21, 2016

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

Dear President Obama:

I am deeply concerned about the escalating tensions between water protectors and law enforcement over construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) under Lake Oahe. I agree with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) determination, announced on November 14, 2016, that additional environmental reviews and consultation with Tribes are warranted before any decision is made on the pipeline crossing at Lake Oahe. Unfortunately, this review does not prevent Energy Transfer Partners, LLC from continuing construction on sacred sites and lands up to Lake Oahe, and has not done enough to ease tensions on the ground. Therefore, I urge your Administration to immediately rescind Dakota Access, LLC's construction permits, halt construction on sacred sites, and assign federal observers to be present at all times to alleviate tensions in real time.

Federal observers on site are critical to protecting all parties involved, and ensuring people are able to peacefully gather and exercise their First Amendment rights. Reports indicate that on November 20, 2016, approximately 400 water protectors gathered on Backwater Bridge and were subjected to tear gas, rubber bullets, and a water cannon during cold 20 degree Fahrenheit weather. This breakdown in peaceful demonstration underscores the need for open lines of communication between water protectors and law enforcement officials. Impartial federal observers can help bridge this gap and prevent future confrontations.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Raul Ruiz".

Raul Ruiz, M.D.
Ranking Member
House Subcommittee on Indian, Insular
and Alaska Native Affairs