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United States Senate
**COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION**
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125
WEBSITE: <https://commerce.senate.gov>

December 12, 2025

Amy Andryszak
President & CEO
Interstate Natural Gas Association of America
and the INGAA Foundation
25 Massachusetts Ave NW, Suite 500N
Washington, DC 20001

Ms. Andryszak:

Pipeline incidents can have devastating effects on the health and safety of our communities and our economy. Since 2015, there have been 655 significant gas transmission incidents resulting in 21 fatalities, 48 injuries, and more than \$800 million in damages.¹ These serious risks underscore why Congress created the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) to develop and implement pipeline safety regulations that protect the American public. I am concerned by recent reporting that indicates PHMSA leadership is not heeding Congress's directive and is instead pursuing a reckless safety rollback agenda—and that they are doing so at the behest of the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America (INGAA). Compounding my concerns, it appears multiple senior PHMSA officials have close personal ties to INGAA, raising serious questions about whether INGAA is wielding outsized influence over agency decision making. Accordingly, I am seeking documents and information regarding INGAA's relationship with and access to senior PHMSA leadership.

Ben Kochman is currently serving as Deputy Administrator of PHMSA, following his appointment by President Trump in January 2025.² Prior to the confirmation of the PHMSA Administrator on September 18, 2025, Mr. Kochman led the agency. He also served on the Trump-Vance 2025 Transition team and was involved in transition activities related to the Department of Transportation.³ Before becoming one of the federal government's lead pipeline safety officials, INGAA employed Mr. Kochman for nearly four years as the Director of Pipeline Safety Policy, where he advanced the policy interests of interstate natural gas pipeline operators.⁴

¹ PHMSA, "Significant Incident 20 year trend," *Data and Statistics*, (accessed Dec. 1, 2025) <https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/data-and-statistics/pipeline/pipeline-incident-20-year-trends>.

² Ogozalek, Sam, "DOT Announces Over a Dozen Political Appointees," *Politico Pro*, (Jan. 31, 2025); <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/2025/01/dot-announces-over-a-dozen-political-appointees-00201895>.

³ Pawlyk, Oriana and Chris Marquette, "Trump's DOT transition team adds more former agency staffers," *Politico*, (Jan. 9, 2025); <https://www.politico.com/live-updates/2025/01/09/congress/trump-dot-landing-team-00197381>.

⁴ "Deputy Administrator," *PHMSA*, (accessed Dec. 10, 2025); <https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/about-phmsa/leadership/deputy-administrator>.

Keith Coyle is currently serving as Chief Counsel of PHMSA, the agency’s top lawyer. As Chief Counsel, Mr. Coyle oversees PHMSA’s regulatory agenda and enforcement program. Prior to working as the lead federal pipeline safety attorney, Mr. Coyle was a Shareholder at Babst Calland, where his roster of significant pipeline industry clients included INGAA, according to his financial disclosure.⁵

According to a recent investigative report by *ProPublica*, PHMSA has advanced at least 23 actions since the start of this Administration that propose or implement amendments to safety rules—many of which seek to rollback important safety and incident reporting requirements.⁶ According to the report, PHMSA leadership initiated at least four of these actions in response to requests or specific concerns raised by INGAA.⁷ Deputy Administrator Kochman—whom INGAA employed until his appointment—personally signed off on at least two proposed rulemakings that specifically cite INGAA’s concerns to justify the agency’s actions.⁸ In fact, Deputy Administrator Kochman cited comments that *he personally signed for and submitted on behalf of INGAA* in 2023 to justify potentially easing repair and inspection requirements.⁹

Deputy Administrator Kochman’s actions also include decreasing oversight of the special permit process, which allows operators to apply for waivers to pipeline safety requirements.¹⁰ Additionally, under the leadership of Deputy Administrator Kochman and Mr. Coyle, PHMSA’s proposed enforcement penalties assessed against pipeline operators—many of which INGAA represents—have declined a staggering 98 percent.¹¹

INGAA’s members can be valuable partners in ensuring the safety of our gas pipeline systems. However, it is essential that our pipeline safety officials act independently, consistent with federal ethics rules, and free from undue influence by the companies they oversee.

⁵ Coyle OGE-278e.

⁶ Coburn, Jesse, “How Trump’s Transportation Department is Loosening Safety Rules Meant to Protect the Public,” *ProPublica*, (Nov. 20, 2025); <https://www.propublica.org/article/trump-dot-regulation-safety-rollback-sean-duffy>.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Docket No. PHMSA-2025-0135; Amdt. No. 190-22, (July 1, 2025); <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/07/01/2025-12132/pipeline-safety-rationalize-special-permit-conditions> (citing INGAA’s comments criticizing PHMSA’s purported practice of adopting special permits containing “numerous” conditions); *see also* Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Docket No. PHMSA-2025-0019, (May 21, 2025), footnote 13 (citing INGAA comments on gas pipeline leak detection and repair); <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/05/21/2025-09078/pipeline-safety-repair-criteria-for-hazardous-liquid-and-gas-transmission-pipelines#citation-7-p21717>.

⁹ Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Docket No. PHMSA-2025-0019, (May 21, 2025), footnote 13; *see* Comments on Gas Pipeline Leak Detection and Repair NPRM Docket No. PHMSA-2021-0039, submitted by Ben Kochman for the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America, (Aug. 16, 2023); <https://www.regulations.gov/comment/PHMSA-2021-0039-26287>.

¹⁰ Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Docket No. PHMSA-2025-0135; Amdt. No. 190-22, (July 1, 2025); <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/07/01/2025-12132/pipeline-safety-rationalize-special-permit-conditions>.

¹¹ *See supra* n. 6.

Given these serious questions and concerns, please provide the following documents and information from January 20, 2025, to present:

1. All communications between INGAA or INGAA Foundation employees or representatives and PHMSA Deputy Administrator Kochman. This includes, but is not limited to, all communications regarding or relating to:
 - a. Potential rulemakings;
 - b. PHMSA policies;
 - c. Enforcement cases; and
 - d. Potential conflicts of interest.
2. A complete list of all meetings or events (virtual or in person) between INGAA or INGAA Foundation employees or representatives and Deputy Administrator Kochman. Please specify the date, location, attendees, and subject matter discussed for each such meeting or event.
3. All communications between INGAA or INGAA Foundation employees or representatives and PHMSA Chief Counsel Coyle. This includes, but is not limited to, all communications regarding or relating to:
 - a. Potential rulemakings;
 - b. PHMSA policies;
 - c. Enforcement cases; and
 - d. Potential conflicts of interest.
4. A complete list of all meetings or events (virtual or in person) between INGAA or INGAA Foundation employees or representatives and Mr. Coyle. Please specify the date, location, attendees, and subject matter discussed for each such meeting or event.
5. All communications between INGAA or INGAA Foundation employees or representatives and any PHMSA official regarding or relating to:
 - a. INGAA or INGAA Foundation requests for PHMSA to reconsider or reverse previously adopted safety requirements;
 - b. PHMSA's enforcement penalty guidelines or penalty calculation methods;
 - c. Requests from INGAA or the INGAA Foundation or your member companies seeking to delay, decline, or reduce PHMSA enforcement actions, penalties, or corrective action orders.
6. Please specify the date(s) on which INGAA became aware that Mr. Kochman and Mr. Coyle, respectively, were being considered for or had accepted a position with PHMSA.
7. Copies of all written technical assistance provided by INGAA, the INGAA Foundation, or your member companies to PHMSA.
8. All comments filed by INGAA on PHMSA regulatory actions.
9. All analyses, white papers, technical memos, or suggested regulatory language that INGAA or the INGAA Foundation provided to PHMSA relating to special permits, methane releases, reporting requirements, or enforcement policy changes.
10. Please identify any PHMSA regulatory impact analyses, technical justifications, or draft rule text where PHMSA asked INGAA or the INGAA Foundation to provide edits, comments, suggestions, or data before public notice.
11. All documents and communications referring or relating to Deputy Administrator Kochman's or Mr. Coyle's positions at PHMSA, including how INGAA anticipated their positions would impact agency decision making.

Additionally, please provide the following documents from August 16, 2024, to present:

12. All communications between INGAA employees or representatives and Mr. Kochman while he served on the Trump-Vance 2025 Transition Team. This includes, but is not limited to, all communications regarding or relating to:
 - a. Potential rulemakings;
 - b. PHMSA policies;
 - c. Enforcement cases; and
 - d. Potential conflicts of interest.

Please provide the above requested materials no later than January 5, 2026.

Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation