

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Peaceful Candlelight Vigil To Be Held In St. Thomas As Part Of National Day Of Action Against Dakota Access Pipeline

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ST. THOMAS -- On Tuesday, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., an organization named "St. Thomas Stands with Standing Rock" will organize the community for a nationwide day of action against the Dakota Access Pipeline, with a peaceful candlelight vigil on the steps of the Ron de Lugo Federal Building to demonstrate support for the National Day of Action against the planned pipeline, a press release the group issued on Friday has made known.

Native Americans from scores of tribes have been gathering since April outside Cannon Ball — a town in south-central North Dakota, near the South Dakota border — to protest the Dakota Access pipeline. Starting with members of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, the protest has since grown to several hundred people (estimates vary), most of them from Native American tribes across the country, according to the New York Times.

The Dakota Access pipeline is a \$3.7 billion project that would carry 470,000 barrels of oil a day from the oil fields of western North Dakota to Illinois, where it would be linked with other pipelines, according to The Times. Energy Transfer says the pipeline will pump millions of dollars into local economies and create 8,000 to 12,000 construction jobs — though far fewer permanent jobs to maintain and monitor the pipeline.

Members of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe see the pipeline as a major environmental and cultural threat. They say its route traverses ancestral lands — which are not part of the reservation — where their forebears hunted, fished and were buried. They say historical and cultural reviews of the land where the pipeline will be buried were inadequate. They also worry about catastrophic environmental damage if the pipeline were to break near where it crosses under the Missouri River.

As of early November, the federal government has blocked the pipeline company from crossing the river, saying the Army Corps of Engineers is reviewing approvals previously granted for the project, according to NY Times.

According to the release, the peaceful candlelight vigil will demonstrate St. Thomas Stands with Standing Rock's support for the nationwide protest against the pipeline. Participants will gather with candles and signs during the peaceful protest, and the group is inviting all members of the community to join. St. Thomas Stands with Standing Rock also plan on photographing the vigil and posting the demonstration on social media. A planning meeting was held Saturday at the Global Life Church on Raphune Hill, where signs were to be created and strategies discussed, according to the release.

The group will join with the Indigenous Environmental Network, Honor the Earth, and other climate and social justice groups across the country to implore the Obama Administration and President-elect Donald Trump to stop the pipeline. The call to action from Indigenous leaders in Standing Rock is in response to increased violent repression from militarized police as the pipeline company continues construction on sacred land despite a voluntary hold by the Army Corps, according to the release.

Thousands nationwide will call on the current administration and Mr. Trump to take action in favor of Native Americans.

Continuing to fight against the fossil fuel industry and for Indigenous rights is more important than ever, reads the release. This pipeline is a threat to Native sovereignty and would be a climate disaster, it concluded.