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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 17, 2012, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

GASODUCTO

The SPEAKER. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. GUTIERREZ) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, we've all seen bad horror movies, the ones where every time you think it's safe to relax and take a deep breath, the monster is right behind the door. You know the drill. No matter how hard the teenagers in the basement or the swimmers in the lake or the hikers in the wood try to get away, the creature just can't be stopped.

Well, the people of Puerto Rico are stuck in their very own horror movie, one that just won't end, and one with a villain that just won't go away, except the villain isn't a guy wearing a hockey mask or carrying a chain saw. The villain is a bunch of government insiders, and the horror story is about their desire to build a huge gas pipeline.

It's a pipeline that the people of Puerto Rico don't want, that experts have said that Puerto Rico doesn't need, and environmentalists have testified will destroy the natural beauty of thousands of acres on the island. And this might be the scariest part. It's a pipeline that Puerto Rico doesn't even have enough natural gas to operate.

The name of the pipeline is Gasoducto, and the horror story started in 2010. About all that has been missing from the script is bad music and vampires. The story has featured the Puerto Rican people's tax dollars, as much as \$100 million of them, paid to consultants and lobbyists hired by the government, including close friends and allies of the Governor and his ruling party.

It's featured the government hiring a consulting team of former high-ranking Army Corps of Engineer employees based in Florida. The consultants magically convinced the Army Corps to take review of the project away from the local San Juan, Puerto Rico, office. Where did they move it to? Surprise—to Florida, right down the road from where the consultants live and used to work.

It has featured ever-increasing cost estimates of the project, ballooning to nearly \$1 billion. It has featured huge protests and marches by the Puerto Rican people against the pipeline and public opinion polls showing three-quarters of the people strongly opposed to the project.

It has featured power supply experts who studied the government plan and noticed one important flaw. Just as Casa Pueblo, countless technical experts, environmentalists, scientists, and I have insisted to the Army Corps all along, the only current source of natural gas supply available for this project in Puerto Rico was too small for a pipeline to even work.

And finally, it even featured—after tens of millions of dollars spent—the Governor appointing his own commission to make recommendations about how Puerto Rico can make better use of natural gas to meet its energy needs.

The commission, appointed by the very Governor who dreamt up the Gasoducto plan, made three recommendations. None of them—I repeat—none of them included

Gasoducto. Not one. Actually, they discarded it and called it unviable.

Finally, the people of Puerto Rico thought the monster must be dead. Finally, we can stop sending tax dollars to connected government insiders, we can stop worrying about our environment, we can stop wondering where in the world the natural gas for a billion dollar pipeline will actually come from. But that's not how horror movies work.

Last week, the Governor was quoted in the press as saying Gasoducto was still alive. Why? Because the Governor of Puerto Rico claims that the Assistant Secretary of the Army, who oversees the Army Corps of Engineers, has asked him personally not to withdraw the Gasoducto application. Assistant Secretary Darcy wants him, the Governor, to wait a while before pulling the plug, which is already on life support for this monster.

Personally, I find this hard to believe. I don't know why an Assistant Secretary of the Army would want to keep a monster alive that is an unneeded, unwanted insider boondoggle that isn't even wanted by the regime that proposed it in the first place. But I've written to find out, is it true and how could this be?

I expect answers, just like I expect answers on my ongoing request to the Army about how the Army Corps of Engineers has handled this application and why the review was moved away from their employees in Puerto Rico and closer to a bunch of consultants who used to head their office in Florida.

When it comes to Gasoducto, enough is enough. Like in most bad monster movies, Gasoducto has been almost impossible to believe from the very first scene, a silly, unnecessary waste of time and money. It's time to roll the credits and declare this monster dead once and for all.

This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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