



NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

JONATHAN F. THOMPSON
Executive Director and CEO

October 27, 2016

The Honorable Loretta Lynch
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Madam Attorney General:

I was disheartened that you would not meet personally to discuss the ongoing and escalating situation in Morton County, North Dakota, surrounding the Dakota Access Pipeline protests.

As Executive Director of the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA), it is my job to ensure that the voice of America's sheriffs are being heard by the appropriate audience and, right now, Morton County Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier's pleas for help are falling on deaf ears in Washington, DC. When the protests began earlier this summer, Sheriff Kirchmeier and other supporting law enforcement agencies willingly obliged the protesters who wanted to plan peaceful protests. Since that time, however, the actions of the protesters, their behaviors, and their words have created an environment of unrest.

Sheriff Kirchmeier, his department, and his county are being deluged with instances of arson, vandalism, trespassing, rioting, and an overall sense of threat and intimidation. Each new "protest" brings with it more aggressive tactics, encouraged by out-of-state instigators with documented histories of violence, drug use, and other criminal activity. This leaves law enforcement fearing for the safety of their communities and themselves. As recently as this past weekend, an attack on a law enforcement aviation patrol caused considerable havoc and endangered the pilot and crew of a helicopter contracted to aid Morton County. This orchestrated escalation is long past the point of peaceful and respectful protest. It is dangerous for members of law enforcement, the community, and those seeking to undertake lawful commerce in the region.

Sheriff Kirchmeier is faced with a well-orchestrated campaign to undermine his department's lawful obligation and authority to protect life and property. They are now illegally preventing the completion of a project under the guise of environmental and cultural concerns—an obvious ruse. They are threatening ranchers and farms and trespassing onto private property to intimidate and scare local citizens. It is nothing less than lawless behavior perpetrated by professional protesters with no vested interest in the Pipeline nor any ties to the communities they claim will be affected. There are now vocal concerns that one Tribal Chairman's sister has exercised her influence as a White House staffer and a Department of Interior's

Bureau of Indian Affairs executive to actively thwart the authorization of federal law enforcement reinforcements. If true, this behavior warrants a formal investigation of those complicit in aggravating this situation.

To protect his county, its citizens, and ensure lawful commerce can continue, Sheriff Kirchmeier is relying on the good graces of other states willing to provide manpower to back-up the Morton County Sheriff's Office (MCSO). The men and women of MCSO have been working extraordinary hours since August. They have repeatedly sought support from their federal law enforcement partners. However, they have been told that, beyond meaningless statements, no further support would be forthcoming.

Even after the alleged protesters took refuge on federal property, no action to limit their growth or their ability to stage illegal riots on private property has been taken. From our perspective, the federal government's inaction is tantamount to supporting (and encouraging) dangerous behavior by the same individuals committed to creating economic and community chaos.

Senator Heidi Heitkamp has similarly requested federal support with the same federal response: *"If the Administration is serious about maintaining the peace and sanctity of this land and our communities, it's absolutely critical that it steps in with the support our local law enforcement needs to keep our ranchers, our tribes, and the protesters protected. For months I've been pushing our federal agencies to provide the resources and certainty North Dakotans need, and I'll keep it up – because no family or business should have to fear for their personal safety or the safety of their property."*

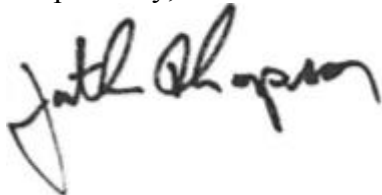
Law enforcement has to abide by a host of legitimate methods and means to protect its citizens and their communities. Similarly, they have an obligation to protect the right of protesters to exercise their free speech. When 2,500 protesters are threatening, intimidating, and using guerrilla tactics to stop a legal commercial initiative, something is terribly wrong with our civilization.

As you know, NSA pledged its support to Morton County when called upon. Our members from across the country have provided additional deputies, troopers, and officers after the signing of the EMAC by Governor Dalrymple.

The situation in Morton County, North Dakota, is dire. In closing I want to quote Sheriff Kirchmeier during today's press briefing: *"I just want to reiterate, this escalated criminal behavior by protesters is unacceptable and should not continue for the safety of all involved."*

I ask you again to meet to discuss this situation further and to heed the call of law enforcement on the ground in North Dakota who need federal support from the Nation's chief law enforcement officer.

Respectfully,



Jonathan F. Thompson