

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN McCAIN
CHAIRMAN, SENATE COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
FULL COMMITTEE HEARING
PIPELINE SAFETY REAUTHORATION
MAY 11, 2000

- C I am pleased to call to order this full Committee hearing to address the critically important issue of pipeline transportation safety.
- C In our effort to reauthorize and improve federal pipeline safety programs, today's hearing is designed to obtain input from public safety advocates, the National Transportation Safety Board, the Department of Transportation and its Inspector General, industry and others interested in promoting pipeline safety.
- C During this hearing, we will be told that statistically, pipeline transportation is perhaps the safest form of transportation. Statistically, that may be true. But, statistics are little comfort to those who have experienced the tragic consequences of the pipeline accidents that do occur.
- C This morning we will hear of the enormous loss of three families who lost their sons as a result of a pipeline accident last June in Bellingham, Washington. While enduring the tragic loss of their beloved boys -- a tragedy almost impossible to bear -- these parents have demonstrated continued strength and courage. Over the past year, each has turned their personal tragedy into a crusade to improve pipeline safety so that others will never experience the kind of loss they have endured. I commend each of them: Mr. and Mrs. Frank and Mary King; Ms. Marlene Robinson and Mr. Bruce Brabec; and Ms. Katherine Dalen. The Committee looks forward to hearing from you shortly.
- C In March, this Committee held a field hearing, chaired by Senator Gorton, in Bellingham, Washington, during which 18 witnesses provided information and expressed views on the Bellingham accident. Today's hearing will not repeat that testimony. Instead, each witness has been asked to direct their testimony to a broad range of pipeline safety issues, including the three pipeline safety bills that have been introduced in the Senate.
- C I am committed to moving a comprehensive pipeline reauthorization bill through the legislative process as soon as possible. We must act to help improve pipeline safety and prevent future tragedies like that which occurred in Bellingham.
- C I also want to thank Senator Murray and Senator Gorton for all their hard work on this issue.

C I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses and am eager to hear their suggestions on what actions Congress should take to improve pipeline transportation safety.