SPIEGEL & MCDIARMID LLP

Natural Gas



Natural gas has emerged as a critically important energy source for the United States, and gas pipelines increasingly seek higher rates from consumers to reflect this trend. The lawyers of Spiegel & McDiarmid LLP represent local government entities such as local distribution companies (LDCs) and municipal utilities, as well as states, consumer advocates and landowners, with whom we share commitments to maintaining low gas rates and responsible land use.

Our clients rely on us for the full range of regulatory, transactional, negotiation and litigation services related to all aspects of natural gas, with a special long-standing expertise in Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) rate cases. We file protests of proposed rate increases with FERC and pursue them through negotiation or to litigation as appropriate. We also deal with issues related to gas tariffs, terms and conditions, certification of new pipelines and expansions of existing pipelines, and pipeline siting and safety.

The development of shale gas through “fracking” has had various economic and legal effects on our clients. New sources of gas in non-traditional locations require new pipeline entry points, new directions of pipeline gas flow, additional compressors, new piping or even entire reconfigurations of gas pipelines, all of which impact rates. New pipelines may also need to be built, while other pipelines could see reduced capacity or even face abandonment. We help our clients deal with the rate and land use fallout from all these developments.

Another important issue for FERC-regulated natural gas infrastructure is that some facilities constructed in the early 20th century are still in use. We have assisted communities in the transition to alternative energy supplies when pipelines that are no longer physically or economically viable have been abandoned. In addition, we have helped clients act to minimize rate impacts as older facilities are upgraded or reconstructed to meet current safety standards.

The lawyers of Spiegel & McDiarmid combine industry and legal expertise in ways most firms can’t. We always keep in mind the end game of the legal process, analyzing every client matter from a big-picture perspective. Most of all, we understand our municipal, consumer advocate and land-use clients’ concerns, and we have never represented gas

pipelines. We are fully focused on the public interests in minimizing environmental impacts and providing reliable energy supply while maintaining the lowest possible rates for end-use customers. And we understand the cutting-edge issues that arise in balancing those objectives, such as the complex legal issues that emerge when a pipeline's preferred routing seeks to override state-owned conservation easements and local zoning.