Dear Senator Warner,

On behalf of Lynnhaven River NOW and our 16,000 members, we urge you to oppose the "Standardizing Permitting and Expediting Economic Development Act" (SPEED Act, H.R. 4776). As a coastal district on the front lines of climate change, Hampton Roads faces the highest rate of sea-level rise on the East Coast and roughly a 10% increase in heavy rainfall since 2006, resulting in more frequent flooding in our streets and neighborhoods. Weakening environmental safeguards now would further endanger our homes, economy, and way of life in coastal Virginia.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a cornerstone of those safeguards. It requires federal projects to undergo careful environmental review and ensures the public has a voice in decisions that affect their health, safety, and environment. The SPEED Act would undercut NEPA's core protections and limit meaningful public input. While proponents claim it would "speed up" projects, the real causes of delay are chronic understaffing, underfunding, and insufficient training at federal agencies – not NEPA itself. The solution is to invest in agency capacity, so reviews are thorough, predictable, and efficient, not to strip away the very framework that prevents costly mistakes and pollution.

We are especially concerned that the SPEED Act would fast-track fossil fuel projects in frontline communities while sidelining cleaner alternatives. By weakening review requirements and climate considerations, it would effectively "rig the system" in favor of oil, gas, and pipelines, increasing pollution and risk for working-class and minority neighborhoods that already bear disproportionate burdens. This approach prioritizes short-term corporate profits over public health, climate resilience, and long-term energy security.

A better path is to strengthen NEPA capacity while streamlining permitting for clean energy. Strong oversight and timely approvals can go hand in hand. Additional staff, funding, and improved interagency coordination have already allowed agencies like the Department of Energy to shorten NEPA review times without weakening environmental standards. We urge you to champion reforms that expand agency resources and prioritize faster permitting for offshore wind, transmission, solar, and storage – the projects that will cut pollution, stabilize energy costs, and improve resilience in districts like yours.

Dominion Energy's Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind (CVOW) project shows how this balanced approach works. After nearly a decade of planning, scientific review, and public engagement under the existing NEPA framework, this 2.6-gigawatt project off Virginia Beach is now under construction. Its 176 turbines will power roughly 660,000 homes and cut climate pollution equivalent to taking about one million cars off the road. CVOW is expected to create about 900 jobs annually during construction and support roughly 1,100 long-term operations jobs, many in Hampton Roads, helping establish our region as an offshore wind hub and bringing hundreds of millions of dollars in investment to local workers and businesses. This is exactly the kind of well-vetted, community-supported

project NEPA is designed to produce – and the kind of progress that broad NEPA rollbacks like those in the SPEED Act could undermine.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues further or provide additional information on how the SPEED Act could affect Virginia Beach. We respectfully ask you to oppose H.R. 4776, defend NEPA's vital protections, and champion clean energy and bipartisan measures that safeguard our community's future.

Sincerely,

Karen Forget // Executive Director // LRNow

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