

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2309

November 21, 2016

The Honorable Loretta Lynch  
Attorney General  
United States Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Lynch,

I am extremely concerned after hearing reports of dangerous clashes between police and protestors of the Dakota Access Pipeline project near Cannon Ball, ND. The reported use of water cannons for crowd control in sub-freezing temperatures is excessive and unnecessary, and I urge you to take action to protect the First Amendment rights of protestors, and the physical safety of all involved parties.

Video of the incident appears to show that the water cannons were not simply being used for fire control, or even crowd control, but were often directed at small crowds or even individual protestors. Combined with the onset of wintry weather, water cannons are extremely dangerous and potentially lethal weapons, and I urge you to investigate their use on protestors.

On November 14, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced that additional analysis of the Dakota Access Pipeline project is necessary and invited the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe to engage due to potential impact of a pipeline leak on the Tribe's drinking water supply. In the interim, the Army Corps has made clear that pipeline construction under Lake Oahe – where the Tribe gets its drinking water– cannot occur without a federal easement.

Native American populations have struggled for decades under the complex burden of historical trauma, and I have witnessed and admired how these communities have turned to their cultural foundations to build strength against that burden. These tactics against protestors exercising their Constitutional rights threaten to add another layer of trauma to these communities. I urge you to do everything in your power to prevent further escalation of violence. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Al Franken  
United States Senator