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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 16, 2012

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Congressman Albio Sires and Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy Issue Joint Press Release Demanding Stricter Regulations for Natural Gas Pipelines in Dense Urban Areas

JERSEY CITY – Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy and Congressman Albio Sires today issued a joint press release demanding the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) better protect highly-populated urban areas from the explosive threat of natural gas pipelines by adopting new rules pertaining to the construction and operation of these pipelines.

PHMSA fails to even consider – let alone safeguard – cities with mid-rises, high-rises and skyscrapers, and the more tightly-packed populations that call those cities home.

“As they presently stand, PHMSA pipeline safety regulations fall woefully short of protecting dense urban areas,” said Mayor Healy. “The agency imposes its *strictest* safety standards on pipelines in cities that have as few as *two four-story buildings*. In Jersey City, we are home to the state’s five tallest buildings and have hundreds of residential and commercial buildings well above four stories in a small geographic area which is not even contemplated by this regulatory agency.”

The inadequacy of PHMSA’s regulations means cities as population-diverse as Jersey City and Huntsville, Alabama qualify for the *same* protection even though *20 times* more people are in harm’s way of a faulty pipeline in Jersey City than in Huntsville.

“Even if rules for dense urban areas are ultimately instituted, our belief is that a pipeline of the size and high pressure proposed by Spectra would still be too dangerous for a city the size of Jersey City,” said Mayor Healy. “Our position remains that an alternative route should be sought for this proposed natural gas pipeline.”

To ensure that PHMSA’s regulations better reflect and protect population-dense areas, the City, with Congressman Sires’ support, has filed a petition asking PHMSA to change its pipeline safety regulations.

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“We support Jersey City’s efforts to implement these changes and want PHMSA to fully and adequately review the proposal made by the City of Jersey City,” said **Congressman Sires**, who sits on the Congressional Committee that oversees the agency. “It is our responsibility as legislators to ensure the safest level of regulation of these pipelines which have been in the news recently for safety breaches, including in urban areas.”

The City’s proposed regulatory changes (1) add new classifications to PHMSA’s rules that reflect cities with mid-rises, high-rises and skyscrapers – and the significant increases in population density that correlate with those structures, and (2) call on PHMSA to develop and adopt more stringent safety standards to protect these new density classifications.

All media inquiries should be directed to Jennifer Morrill, Press Secretary to Mayor Jerramiah T. Healy at 201-547-4836 or 201-376-0699.///