

IL Leads Nation with Legislation that Invests in Underserved Minority Communities: Awaits Governor Pritzker's Signature

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, UNITED STATES, June 24, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As a former legislator and candidate for Florida Attorney General I have traveled across our nation meeting people from all walks of life. From these experiences it became clear that our political conversation has focused on those who can afford to speak the loudest, instead of those who work the hardest. I started People Over Profits in 2019 to help raise the voices of people from all across the country who have been left behind in our political conversation.

Pembroke Township is a rural, Black community near Chicago. Nearly half of Pembroke residents are unable to find work and the community has an average annual income of less than \$15,000. Those same residents pay between \$500 - \$800 per month to heat their homes with propane. Those who cannot afford propane use wood-burning fireplaces to find warmth in the winter. Businesses have shown little interest in setting up shop in this community because of the lack of infrastructure, which limits the economic opportunities for Pembroke residents. The cycle of generational poverty in Pembroke is nearly impossible to overcome.

Reverend Jesse Jackson and other civil rights leaders have worked with local, state, and federal officials in Illinois to address Pembroke's energy crisis and bring natural gas to the community. Natural gas is an affordable fuel that can be used until the country fully transitions to renewable energy and fortunately, the Illinois Senate recently approved legislation to create the Pembroke Township Natural Gas Investment Pilot Program. This program is the product of all levels of government working together with business, such as Nicor, the company building the infrastructure, to create a program that will improve life in this community.

Black Americans pay nearly three times more than white households for energy and in some places, pay more for energy than they do for rent. Clean energy solutions that save money in the long run require upfront investments and access to capital that excludes many Black communities. A natural gas pipeline is not the most ideal solution to energy inequity in Pembroke; but in this situation, it's necessary. Perfect cannot be the enemy of good in the communities that have been left behind for generations.

I applaud the Illinois Assembly for standing up for consumers in Pembroke and encourage Governor Pritzker to sign this important legislation. Pembroke's residents deserve access to quality education and good jobs, and natural gas can be their "bridge" to a more prosperous

future.

-- Sean Shaw

Sean Shaw served in the Florida House of Representatives and made history in 2018 as the Florida Democratic Party's first African-American nominee for Attorney General. He is the founder of People Over Profits.

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