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## Gas permitting issues not 'left or right': EQT CEO

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Boston, 11 June (Argus) – Addressing the natural gas industry's permitting woes is neither the domain of America's political left nor right, the head of the US' largest gas producer told Argus on Tuesday.

"This pipeline cancellation movement, this happened under a (former president Donald) Trump administration," EQT chief executive Toby Rice said on the sidelines of the Northeast LDC Gas Forum in Boston, Massachusetts. "And we all see the issues with the (President Joe) Biden administration. The point is, this is not a left or right thing."

Rice has been a vocal critic of the energy policies of Biden, most recently regarding his administration's pause on the issuance of permits for new LNG export terminals as the US Department of Energy reviews their economic and climate impacts. Rice has repeatedly blasted the policy as a harmful, vote-seeking gambit.

But meaningful opposition to the construction of new interstate gas pipelines preceded Biden's election. In the six months ended July 2020, an inability to secure needed permits forced developers to cancel or indefinitely pause work on three pipelines: Constitution, Northeast Supply Enhancement, and Atlantic Coast Pipeline.

Proposed interstate gas pipelines require permits from the state agencies of every state through which they are built. This process has hampered developers' ability to build new gas pipelines through states in the northeast US, where those agencies are more hostile than in legacy oil-producing states further south. Many in the industry have responded by calling for rule changes to the permitting process.

The long-delayed Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP), which was allowed by congressional action last year to bypass federal permitting hurdles, is the exception to the rule. MVP's developer Equitrans said on Monday that it had finished construction and asked for federal authorization to begin flowing gas to customers. EQT in March agreed to acquire Equitrans in a \$5.5bn all-stock deal that is expected to close in the fourth quarter of 2024, giving the gas producer control of the new pipeline.

Many analysts see MVP as the last greenfield pipeline project to be built in the northeast for the foreseeable future.

By Julian Hast

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