



For immediate release...

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THE NATIONAL FUEL ACCOUNTABILITY COALITION TO TURN UP THE HEAT ON NATIONAL FUEL THIS JULY
Non-profit Organizations, Community and Religious Leaders to Sponsor Upcoming National Fuel Pickets

BUFFALO, N.Y. – The National Fuel Accountability Coalition, founded by VOICE-Buffalo and People United for Sustainable Housing – PUSH Buffalo – in 2011 that is comprised of eighteen organizations working to partner with National Fuel around the issue of high gas bills and low-income weatherization programs, will **conduct a series of community pickets throughout the month of July** directly outside of National Fuel headquarters in Williamsville. The **first, “Picket for a Community Partnership” will take place Monday, July 2.**

The impending pickets stem from a recent visit to National Fuel last month when members of the coalition brought more than 200 people to rally against the gas conglomerate in a nonviolent direct action on Saturday, May 12. Members of the coalition hope that the pickets will finally lead to a sit down with National Fuel CEO David Smith.

“We called for David Smith to join us in a community dialogue about the company’s practices,” said Citizen Action’s Ina Downing. “We promised to come back every week in the month of July as David Smith leaves work. And, guess what? We are keeping that promise!”

“For years we have been asking David Smith to meet with us to discuss ways that National Fuel can begin to work with community organizations, like ours, to better meet the needs of their customers,” said Jennifer Mecozzi, PUSH organizing director. “Our members fight for those low-income families who must make the tough decision to either feed their families or heat their homes. That’s not right. Something needs to change.”

During the month of July, members of the National Fuel Accountability Coalition will hold **four “Pickets for a Community Partnership”** that will highlight local and national issues surrounding the creation of effective weatherization programs, sustainability, high gas bills, corporate accountability like tax dodging and unaccountable subsidy programs, hydrofracking, green job creation, and alternative energy solutions.

The coalition will picket CEO David Smith at National Fuel offices each week on various days, beginning July 2. Members and partners of the National Fuel Accountability Coalition will sponsor each picket – pickets that will ultimately **lead to a large, “Camp Out for a Community Partnership” event set to occur the last week of July.**

Community Partnership Picket Schedule

Picket Week #1: Children and Families Speak Out!

MESSAGE: Families across WNY are forced to make tough choices to afford high gas bills because houses lack basic insulation. National Fuel CEO David Smith makes \$3,500 per hour off high gas bills. Weatherization is the solution!

Coalition Sponsors: VOICE Buffalo, Citizen Action, PUSH Buffalo

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Picket Week #2: Hold National Fuel Accountable

Date: TBD

Coalition Sponsors: The Coalition for Economic Justice (CEJ), Communication Workers of America, Working Families Party, SEIU 1199, Citizen Action

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Picket Week #3: Weatherization, Sustainability, Green Jobs NOT Fracking!

Date: TBD

Coalition Sponsors: Food and Water Watch, Protecting Our Water Rights, Working Families Party, WNY Drilling Defense,

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Picket Week #4: Partner with the Community Camp Out!

Date: TBD

Coalition Sponsors: The entire National Fuel Accountability Coalition and Occupy Buffalo

“David Smith has continuously refused to meet with us,” stated Shawn Davis, PUSH community leader. “So, we’re going to bring our ‘fight’ directly to him. Our members just want to meet with him to discuss how National Fuel can begin to work with our community to build better partnerships.”

“The members of our community struggle with unaffordable gas bills because of non-insulated homes,” continued Davis. “They need to know that their utility company has their back and that they will work with them to create better living conditions – conditions that promote healthy, green living environments for their families.”

The coalition is calling on National Fuel to invest in weatherization for the people in our region who need it most, for state representatives to mandate community reinvestment by the utility company, for community oversight of the Public Service Commission, and for a long term plan for a community controlled green alternative to National Fuel.

The National Fuel Accountability Coalition is comprised of eighteen organizations throughout Western New York that include: VOICE-Buffalo, PUSH Buffalo, F.A.T.H.E.R.S., The Outsource Center, The Belle Center, Hispanics United of Buffalo, The Coalition for Economic Justice, Millions More Movement – Buffalo Local Action Committee (BLAC), Prisoners Are People Too, Erie County Prisoner’s Rights Coalition, 100 Mighty Men, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, WNY Drilling Defense, Protecting Our Water Rights (POWR), SEIU 1199, B.U.I.L.D Organization, Youth Planning Council (YPC), Citizen Action of Western NY.

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About The National Fuel Accountability Coalition

Since 2010, the National Fuel Accountability Coalition has worked to build a community partnership with National Fuel. The coalition fights for justice for low income and working people who are forced to make tough choices because of unaffordable gas bills that result from houses without basic insulation. National Fuel benefits off this crisis and we strive to make them a part of the solution through a community partnership. For more information about The National Fuel Accountability Coalition, visit www.NFGAccountability.com.

About PUSH Buffalo

People United for Sustainable Housing’s (PUSH) mission is to mobilize residents to create strong neighborhoods with quality affordable housing, expand local hiring opportunities and advance economic justice in Buffalo. PUSH members work with partners and funders to create a healthy, just and strong city that includes community control of resources, living wage jobs and access to quality education, healthcare and transportation. For more information about our growing organization, visit www.PUSHBuffalo.org.

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