

**Joseph Cohen, Executive Director**  
**4615 Public Hearing Remarks**

Mr. Chairman, delegates, my name is Joseph Cohen, and I am the Executive Director of the ACLU of West Virginia. I am here today to speak in opposition to HB 4615.

Our state, our country and our world have been made drastically better places because of non-violent civil disobedience. Martin Luther King, Ghandi, Rosa Parks have shown us that by peacefully standing one's ground in violation of the law, we can crush forces of injustice and bring down tyrants.

HB 4615 is a bill drafted by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) to protect the interests of the extractive industries and their pipelines. The bill is a clone of many we've seen across the country since Standing Rock aimed at silencing indigenous people, water protectors and environmentalists by banning the nonviolent tactics that have been most successful in getting their message heard.

If ALEC was around in 1773, this bill would have been drafted to protect the interests of the East India Tea Company in response to the successes of the Sons of Liberty protesting the tyranny of King George in the Boston Tea Party.

Existing laws already prohibit trespass and malicious destruction of property. HB 4615's excessive fines and penalties make clear that it is meant to silence opponents of the government and the oil companies.

Maybe more troubling is that HB 4615 seeks to expand the definition of "criminal conspiracy". This is the literal embodiment of guilt by association. HB 4615 is designed to scare people out of defending their lands and their homes.

Stand with the patriots and advocates who peacefully put themselves on the line to make this a safer, more just and peaceful place. Vote against HB 4615.