

Thank you your honor.

I am here because of my concern for clean drinking water. Were the actions I have taken perfect? No. Of course not. I am human. I am not perfect.

I will not and would not do this again. I would like to give you context about why I did what I did.

From the very beginning, I have been honest with the public and the courts. I admit what I did. My actions have consequences; I understand that. I am here today to face those consequences, which includes restitution for the rest of my life.

I've had a special and strong relationship with water since I was a young child. I used to go to the Raccoon River to find peace, beauty, comfort, joy, and clean water. Things have dramatically and tragically changed over the years. The Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers, our city's two water sources are both contaminated. Water Department officials have notified the public that the Des Moines River tap water poses the greatest threat to the health of infants and toddlers. Toxicity levels in the Raccoon River are so high and rising, that by late summer it is unlikely that this river will meet federal safety standards.

This is happening right here in the city I was born in. Right here in the rivers I grew up swimming in. This is a very personal issue for me. As a community we are witnessing our children suffering from lack of access to adequate drinking water. My heart grieves at the thought of this. And my heart does not just break for the children of Des Moines, but the children of the world, because all of Creation is connected. The toxins we empty into our waterways in Iowa flow into the Mississippi, which in turn flow into the Gulf.

This concern brought me to the Dakota Access Pipeline and the Energy Transfer Crude Oil pipeline. In 2017 the two pipelines, which make up the Bakken System, leaked at least 8 times, resulting in the spilling of 5,543 gallons of crude oil into our nation's natural resources. One of those 8 leaks happened right here in Iowa. Going to this extreme was out of character for me as I was acting out of desperation.

But now what I desire most is to move on into a quiet, peaceful life of prayer and service. My record with the probation office is spotless. And it will continue to be so. I have not been involved in any form of activism in over four years. Instead, I have deeply immersed myself in service and have grown in my prayer life. My service in the past 4 years includes living with the Sisters of a religious community, working with underprivileged children in Duluth, and feeding the homeless and working poor in Des Moines, as well as providing support for young volunteers in my community who are concerned for the common good of all.

It is my wish to return to Duluth, where there is waiting for me a supportive community that I intend to serve and to learn and to grow from. In Duluth I will continue to make a positive difference in people's lives in order that there will be a better equity in individual lives, families, and society.

I am not a political person. I am certainly not a terrorist. I am simply a person who cares deeply about an extremely basic human right that is under threat: Water. Indigenous tradition teaches us that water is life. Scripture teaches that in the beginning, God created the waters and the earth and that it was good. And even with these strongly held beliefs, going forward I would not repeat my prior actions.