



Weekly Update

January 4, 2012

Hello CORE members,

Happy New Year! I hope all our members had an enjoyable holiday season. Here's to a great 2012!

As many of you are aware, Congress recently passed an extension of the Payroll Tax cut with a line item forcing President Barack Obama to make a decision about the Keystone XL Pipeline within 60 days. Previously, President Obama decided to push back the decision on the pipeline until 2013 (after the 2012 election). The law in Congress is forcing the President's hand.

First, what is the Keystone XL Pipeline? The pipeline, proposed by Canadian company TransCanada, goes from the Tar Sands in Alberta, Canada to the Gulf Coast in Texas. So, what are the issues that environmentalists have with the Keystone XL Pipeline? There are many, but I'm going to address only a few here.

One of the major reasons that there is political support for the pipeline is because of the jobs the construction of the pipeline will supposedly create. TransCanada's press releases on jobs creation figures cite the numbers 80,000 construction jobs and 118,000 related jobs. Those jobs creation numbers are very controversial. For example, in their Presidential Permit application to the State Department, TransCanada itself estimated "a peak workforce of approximately 3,500 to 4,200 construction personnel."

The pipeline's supporters also argue that building the pipeline will help end the U.S.'s dependence on oil from the Middle East. However, according to the companies who own the refineries in south Texas who would receive the pipeline oil, they plan to refine the Canadian crude supplied by the pipeline into diesel and other products for export to Europe and Latin America. Proceeds from these exports are earned tax-free. Much of the fuel refined from the pipeline's heavy crude oil will never reach U.S. drivers' tanks. In addition, the Department of Energy's report on Keystone XL found that decreasing demand through fuel efficiency is the only way to reduce mid-east oil imports with or without the pipeline.

There has been massive grassroots activism around the Keystone XL. For example, in Nebraska, farmers and politicians alike are severely critical of the pipeline because it runs directly through the Ogallala aquifer. In fact, Nebraska's Republican Governor David Heineman opposes the pipeline if it is installed in its proposed location. Additionally, on November 6, 2011 over 10,000 people from all over the U.S. surrounded the White House to say "no" to the KeystoneXL.

One of the main reasons to be against the Keystone XL pipeline is that it makes extracting the heavy tar sands crude from the Boreal Forest in Canada more likely. The Tar Sands is an area in Canada where heavy crude oil is mixed in with sand just under the surface. Extracting and refining this oil is incredibly expensive, both in terms of dollars and in terms of the environment. It takes much more energy to extract and prepare this oil for transport than regular crude oil. This is dangerous in terms of pollutants created and greenhouse gases emitted. In fact, one of the most respected climate scientists in the U.S., James Hansen from NASA, says that fully exploiting the Canadian Tar Sands will be game over for the climate.

We need to keep the pressure up on President Obama about the problems with the Keystone XL Pipeline to ensure that he does not approve it when his 60 days are up. For more information about the Tar Sands and the Keystone XL pipeline you can check out: Tar Sands Action, Greenpeace Canada's Tar Sands campaign page, and the CORE website.

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