

Keystone XL Pipeline

Persuasive Speech

When we think of crude oil, we often think of the gas and diesel fuel it produces. According to the Ranken Energy Corporation, a 42-gallon barrel of oil produces only 19 gallons of gas and 12 gallons of diesel fuel. The remaining third is used in the production of over 6,000 different products including the plastics that encase our cell phones and televisions, the asphalt on our roads, and even the latex gloves that doctors use. Clearly, there is no debate that crude oil is a vital part of our economy and our everyday life. What is a hotly debated topic is how this crude oil will be transported from Canada and the Bakken Formation to the refineries in the south. Since it was first proposed in 2008, the Keystone XL Pipeline has been surrounded by controversies and delays. While the pipeline is supported by many North Dakotans, including our state leaders and representatives in Washington, D.C., recent major oil spills may have made us skeptical of pipelines. Despite the disasters of the pipeline spills in Williston on January 6th and in Glendive, Montana, on January 17th, pipelines are still an effective way to transport oil. The Keystone XL Pipeline will benefit our state and nation by creating jobs, fueling our economy, and building North American energy independence. So let's put on our hard hats and go to work to understand what the Keystone XL Pipeline is, discuss the measures that will be taken to address the controversies and safety issues surrounding its construction, and finally, we will look at its present status in the legislature.

If built, the Keystone XL Pipeline, a 36-inch diameter pipe, will run 1,179 miles from Hardisty, Alberta through Montana, South Dakota, and Nebraska where it will meet existing pipeline in Steel City, Nebraska. The Keystone XL Pipeline is the fourth and final phase of the Keystone Pipeline System. The Keystone Mainline is 1,353 miles of pipeline from Hardisty,

Alberta, to the United States refineries in Illinois. This phase has been in service since June 2010. The Cushing Extension is 298 miles of pipeline that runs from Steele City, Nebraska to existing crude oil terminals and tanks in Cushing, Oklahoma. This second phase has been in service since February 2011. The third phase, the Gulf Coast Pipeline, has been in service since January 2014. This 485 mile pipeline connects Cushing, Oklahoma, and, Nederland, Texas. Since three-fourths of this system is already built and in service, it would seem logical that we would complete this pipeline. So what opposition has set this project back?

One of the concerns surrounding the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline is that it will only carry Canadian crude oil. But according to the Western Energy Alliance, 25% of the Keystone XL capacity will be reserved for Bakken crude from Montana and North Dakota. With new production highs near one million barrels per day in the Williston Basin, infrastructure to transport this oil simply cannot keep up. The Bakken Marketlink portion of the Keystone XL would include facilities to provide crude oil transportation service from Baker, Montana, to Cushing, Oklahoma, via the proposed Keystone XL Pipeline. Currently, Bakken shale crude oil is primarily transported to refineries by rail and truck. Moving the Bakken oil by pipeline will reduce truck-traffic on our highways and free up rail-cars for the transportation of agricultural products.

Another benefit of the Keystone XL Pipeline is jobs and economic growth for Americans. According to the American Petroleum Institute, the pipeline's construction would support 42,100 direct and indirect jobs putting \$2 billion in wages into the pockets of Americans.

The biggest environmental concerns about the pipeline relate to a large aquifer in Nebraska, the Ogallala Aquifer. According to James Goeke, a hydrologist at University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Conservation and Survey Division, Keystone XL's path is east of more than

80 per cent of the Ogallala Aquifer. Goeke concurs with modeling conducted by the State Department and the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality which shows that in the event of a leak, impacts would be localized to as little as tens of feet. That's because the Ogallala Aquifer is a very large rock formation with layers and layers of sands, soils and rock layers. These thick layers offer a natural protection for the water below. For context, water travels through the Aquifer's densely packed layers at a rate of two to three feet per day. The depth of the water along much of the alignment of the pipeline is between 50 and 300 feet deep. Keystone would be buried four feet deep.

To appease environmental concerns relating to potential oil spills, the United States Energy & Commerce Committee stated that TransCanada has voluntarily agreed to add 57 new safety procedures regarding the operating and monitoring of Keystone XL including a higher number of remotely controlled shut-off valves, increased pipeline inspections, and burying the pipe deeper in the ground. In addition, TransCanada uses high-quality carbon steel, capable of withstanding the 3.5-inch teeth from a 65-ton excavator. The pipes are coated with corrosion-resistant coating and cathodic protection; this is the same technique used on bridges to prevent rust from occurring. In the event of a leak, TransCanada will be 100 per cent responsible for responding, cleaning and restoring the site.

Despite all the economic benefits and safety assurances, the Keystone XL Pipeline remains a controversial issue. A poll conducted in 2014 by the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan American fact tank, found that 65% of voters in the U.S. supported building the pipeline. Among its many supporters are North Dakota Senators Heidi Heitkamp and John Hoeven who are working to see that the legislation passes. On January 6th, Senator Hoeven reintroduced legislation to construct the Keystone XL pipeline. According to the January 30,

2015 edition of the Bismarck Tribune, the bill was approved by a 62-36 vote in the Senate.

According to the Wall Street Journal website, legislation to approve this pipeline passed in the House on February 11th with a 270-156 vote. However, President Obama vetoed this piece of legislation on February 24th, and the Senate failed to override the veto on March 4th. The Washington Times reported that Senator Hoeven said pipeline supporters didn't win the battle, but will "win the war." Senator Heitkamp said the failure to override the veto is clear evidence that more work remains to gather additional support for the project.

Supporters will keep their hard hats on because the Keystone XL Pipeline's construction would complete the Keystone Pipeline System, thus allowing oil to be transported effectively from Canada and the Bakken Formation to refineries in the south. Transporting oil from environmentally responsible Canada rather than purchasing it from unfriendly nations that do not meet basic environmental standards makes sense from multiple standpoints—diplomatic, environmental, and economic. I know that the recent oil spills in Glendive and Williston have not only left an oily sheen on the state, but have eroded our confidence in pipelines. But we can insist that the Keystone XL Pipeline uses better materials and has more inspections. The oil industry is a vital part of our economy and everyday life. Without it, the plastics that encase our cell phones and televisions, the asphalt on our roads, and even the latex gloves that doctors use may not exist. The Keystone XL Pipeline *is* the best way to transport oil to refineries and factories and legislative action to approve this project will benefit our country for many years to come.

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