



Construction of the Keystone XL pipeline could play a huge role in our country's economic recovery. The pipeline would create tens of thousands of new construction jobs, provide easy access to affordable energy from our ally to the north, and generate billions of dollars in tax revenue. However, a recent decision by the Obama Administration to delay making a decision on granting a permit has put all of that into jeopardy.

In early November, the Obama administration announced that it would delay action on the pipeline until 2012 despite an extensive environmental impact statement (EIS) released by the U.S. Department of State in August. The EIS found that the pipeline project posed "no significant impacts to most resources" along its proposed path.

The project delay was seemingly made by Obama for political reasons despite the fact that millions of Americans are looking for work. In addition to the estimated 20,000 short-term construction jobs created by the Keystone project, it is has been projected that ten times as many permanent jobs could be created by the project in the long run.

The Keystone XL project is a high-tech petroleum pipeline that would transport crude oil derived from the Athabasca Oil Sands in western Canada nearly 1,700 miles to processing facilities throughout the United States. Despite the positive EIS findings and the fact the project leaders have already agreed to meet or exceed 57 safety standards set by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, the permit has still been delayed.

I was disappointed that President Obama was persuaded in his decision not by the economic benefits of the project, but rather by extreme environmentalist interest groups.

Already, the oil sands in western Canada have had a positive impact on Colorado's economy. Flatiron Construction, headquartered in Colorado, recently opened an office in Ft. McMurray, the town that services the Athabasca Oil Sands. The company currently receives almost 40

percent of its revenues from Canadian projects.

There is no reason we should neglect our reliable trade partner to the north. According to the Canadian government, 143,800 jobs in Colorado depend on U.S.-Canada trade, 10,866 people in Colorado are employed by 123 Canadian-owned companies and Colorado sells more goods to Canada than any other country in the world.

While the recent decision on the Keystone project has significant implications for the viability of our economy, it also has another very important impact on the national security of the country. As a Marine Corps combat veteran, I believe it is imperative that we take into consideration the security implications of our national energy policy. There is no doubt that the Keystone project would greatly help us reduce our dangerous dependency on sometimes hostile foreign sources of energy.

Most American voters realize this and prefer our country rely on Canada for oil instead of other foreign nations. A poll conducted last month by Harris Interactive for the American Petroleum Institute found that 79 percent of Americans feel that more oil should come from Canada.

Also, out of the world's top fifteen exporters of oil, Canada is one of only two countries considered "free" according to Freedom House, an international organization.

Some estimates place the amount of potential oil in the Athabasca sands at 1.7 trillion barrels, which could dwarf estimated reserves of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Having traveled to the Middle East courtesy of the Marine Corps, this is of importance to me. During my entire military career I was never sent to Canada to protect oil fields.

This month I signed on as an co-sponsor of House Resolution 3548, which would replace the president's authority to approve the project and would transfer it to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). I am hopeful the bill will expedite the permitting process.

It is time to take election year politics out of the decision-making process surrounding this issue.

If we do not act now, the Canadians will look somewhere else to sell their oil. Canadian politicians have stepped up their support for plans to redirect the oil to Asian markets. If we are not going to develop our own resources to their full extent, then expanding our energy trade with our friendly neighbors to the north is clearly the next best option.

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*Published Dec. 8, 2011*