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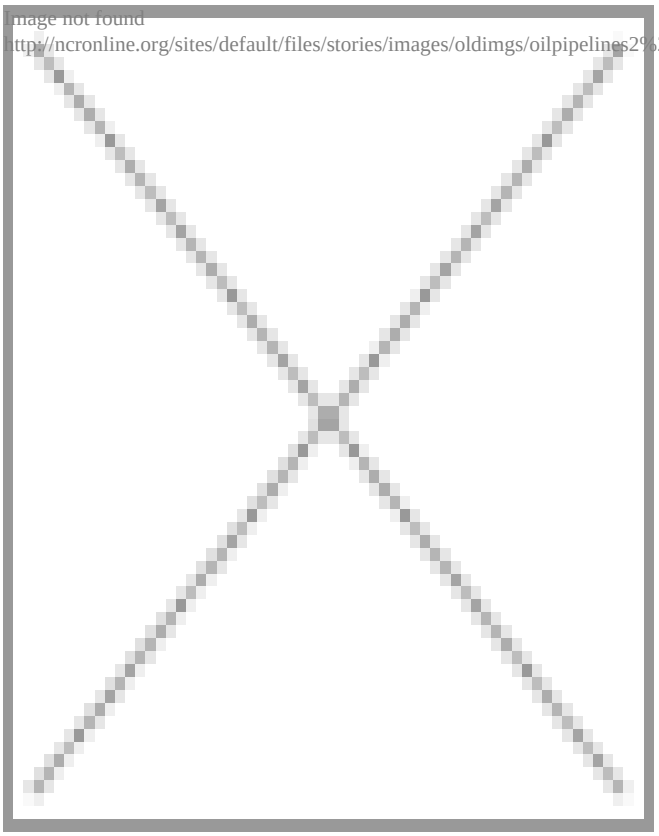
Activists seek to counter Keystone revival in Senate

Brian Roewe | Feb. 14, 2012 Eco Catholic

The campaign to create the Keystone XL transnational pipeline continues, as Senators sought Monday to attach pro-pipeline legislation to a transportation bill.

An amendment (S.A. 1537 [1]) to the bill S. 1813, proposed by Sen. John Hoeven, R-N.D., and co-sponsored by five GOP senators, would authorize the pipeline?s construction by TransCanada Corporation ?to construct, connect, operate and maintain pipeline facilities,? while negating the need for a presidential permit.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Separate legislation in the House also seeks to bypass a presidential permit for the pipeline?s authorization. The North American Energy Access Act, Title XIV of H.R. 7 [2] (the American Energy and Infrastructure Jobs Act of 2012) would require the Federal Energy Regulation Commission to issue a permit to TransCanada no later than 30 days; if the commission fails to do so, the permit would be issued automatically at the expiration of the 30-day period.

The news of the legislation launched several environmental groups into action. 350.org, a global grassroots movement for solving climate change, began a signature campaign shortly after learning of the Senate bill [3], setting a goal of 500,000 signatures in 24 hours. At the time of posting, the group had attained almost 700,000 signatures, with 350.org founder Bill McKibben taking the message to satirical pundit Stephen Colbert [4] and

his show last night.

The Keystone pipeline would run from the Athabasca Oil Sands in Alberta, Canada down to refineries on the Gulf Coast in Texas, forming a spine down the continent.

The Obama admin-
istration rejected a permit Jan. 18 for the pipeline?s construction, but days later, Republicans in Congress began introducing legislation to approve the pipeline. The Hill reported yesterday [5] that the president remains open to the project and has told TransCanada they can reapply for a permit.

[For a timeline of Keystone XL from Grist.org, click here] [6]

Other groups have joined 350.org in speaking out against the latest legislation, including former vice president Al Gore and his Climate Reality Project. In a post on the Climate Reality website, Gore said [7], ?If approved and built, this pipeline, Keystone XL, would carry the most carbon-intensive source of oil on the planet.?

Gore said that the U.S. should be looking to work with Canada on clean energy and energy efficiency, rather than investing more money in ?the production of more dirty oil.?

?It doesn?t matter where you live, or if the pipeline crosses into your home state. An increase of carbon pollution anywhere leads to climate change everywhere.?

Gore encouraged people to attach their name to the signature campaign, as did the Sierra Club, MoveOn, the League of Conservation Voters and outdoor apparel/environmental group Patagonia, among others.

A letter signed by 15 climate scientists [8] Monday urged Congressional leaders to block approval of the pipeline.

?The tar sands are a huge pool of carbon, one that it does not make sense to exploit. It takes a lot of energy and water to extract and refine this resource into useable fuel, and the mining is environmentally destructive,? read the letter.

?We can say categorically that this pipeline is not in the nation's, or the planet's best interest.?

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Links:
[1] http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CREC-2012-02-13/pdf/CREC-2012-02-13-pt1-PgS570.pdf#page=1
[2] http://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20120213/CPRT-112-HPRT-RU00-HR7RCP.pdf
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[6] http://grist.org/climate-energy/keystone-xl-the-story-of-a-big-ass-pipeline-proposal-so-far/
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