

Mike Hill: Urge the President to Approve the Keystone XL for Energy Security

Obscured by all the noise coming out of Washington D.C., there has been an energy renaissance quietly emerging in the U.S. that promises security not enjoyed for decades. Thanks to advances in hydraulic fracturing and directional drilling, the U.S. surpassed Russia and Saudi Arabia to become the largest energy producer in the world. In October, the U.S. produced more oil than it imported for the first time in nearly two decades. While these are significant domestic production milestones, the President has avoided a decision that could also make our oil imports more secure. After five years, it is time for the President to take action and approve the Keystone XL pipeline.

The Keystone XL pipeline is designed to transport over 800,000 barrels (33.6 million gallons) of oil per day from Canada to Gulf coast refineries – the same refineries that produce the vast majority of the 26 million gallons of gasoline and diesel consumed in Florida each day. With Keystone XL, our crude imports from our friendly neighbor to the north could reach 4 million barrels per day by 2020, twice what we currently import from the Persian Gulf.

The Keystone XL pipeline, designed to be the safest crude oil pipeline in the world, has received all the necessary environmental, right-of-way, and construction permits along the path. The Keystone XL, a \$7 billion project, requires no government funding. The Keystone XL is supported by 82 percent of U.S. voters, has bipartisan support in Congress, is endorsed by diverse public figures like Warren Buffett, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush, and has received support from editorial boards such as the Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, and USA Today. Essentially, the pipeline will provide oil from a trusted trading partner, displace oil imports from distant, volatile geopolitical regions, reduce the leverage OPEC has used in international markets over the past four decades, and immediately provide thousands of construction jobs. Obviously, the Keystone XL is beneficial to the U.S. on many levels.

So what is the hang up?

Since the Keystone XL pipeline crosses an international border, the U.S. Department of State is required to review the project to ensure it is in the interest of the country – typically a two year process. The President has chosen to insert himself into the decision process. Since the initial application in 2008 and a favorable Department of State environmental statement in 2010, the President has continually delayed approval by requiring additional reports, extending public comment periods, and deferring the decision until after elections. The pipeline could have been operational today if it had not been for all the unnecessary delays – unbelievable and unacceptable.

The Keystone XL pipeline is a vital step toward U.S. energy security, and President Obama needs to hear our support for his approval. I am sponsoring a memorial in the Florida House urging the President to approve the Keystone XL pipeline. I hope you will urge other Florida lawmakers join me and I also encourage you to join the effort and let the President know that it is time to approve the Keystone XL pipeline.