WASHINGTON — A proposal to force speedy approval of the Keystone XL pipeline got a major boost Friday when House Republicans announced they will include the measure in a package of items Congress must act on before the Christmas recess.

The move is important because it means Senate Democrats who oppose the Keystone provisions might have to swallow them to get their top priorities.

TransCanada has agreed to alter the route of its 1,700-mile Canada-to-Texas pipeline to avoid Nebraska's environmentally sensitive Sand Hills, but the State Department said reviewing the changes could delay the project into 2013.

Rep. Lee Terry, R-Neb., is leading the charge to accelerate that timeline. He unveiled his legislative proposal Friday.

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