

Winningreen Issue Alert

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Nebraska Congressman works to save Keystone XL pipeline

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Issue: Recently the Obama administration delayed the approval of the Keystone XL pipeline which would bring 700,000 barrels a day of crude oil from Canada to Gulf refineries until after the 2012 election. To no one's surprise, his decision was hailed by environmentalists and even some Nebraskans because of the proposed route over the Ogallala aquifer in Nebraska. Now, U.S. Representative Lee Terry (NE-R) has introduced a bill that might just save the pipeline project.

HR3548 would replace the president's authority to approve the pipeline with that of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The bill also mandates approval of a permit by FERC within 30 days after receiving an application for the project. If FERC takes no action within thirty days, the permit is considered to have been issued.

The second step involves rerouting of the pipeline through Nebraska to avoid the aquifer. After the new route is approved by Nebraska's Department of Environmental Quality and Nebraska's governor, FERC would have another thirty days to issue the final permit. If action were not taken within the final thirty days, the modified route shall be considered approved without FERC's action. All environmental regulations and pipeline safety requirements would still have to be met.

Construction on the non-modified part of the pipeline route could begin as soon as the first permit is issued. Nebraska's reroute approval has already been worked out with TransCanada, the pipeline owner, approved by the Nebraska legislature and signed into law by Governor

Heineman. The state has also allocated \$2 million for a new environmental study of the new route to be conducted by the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality. Estimates are that this should be completed in six to nine months.

Comment: "The American people want us to stop buying Venezuelan oil. The Keystone Pipeline is a key component to making that happen. Going forward with FERC is simply moving the authority to an agency that understands pipelines. This legislation means that Keystone will progress in a timely manner and that our country gets the much-needed jobs and energy security that it will bring," said Congressman Terry.

Comment: "Further delay of the Keystone Pipeline unnecessarily jeopardizes this safe, quality project that will decrease our dependence on foreign oil and create thousands of jobs – especially at a time when millions of men and women are looking for work," said William P. Hite, President of United Association union of plumbers, fitters and welders.

Background and links: HR3548 has forty cosponsors to date. A similar bill has been introduced in the U.S. Senate and has thirty cosponsors. You can read the bill (4 pages) at <http://thomas.loc.gov/>