

If Built, the Keystone XL Pipeline Will Spill: Time to Act

Jennifer S. Baker in Native Condition.

Here we go! Again!

This past Wednesday, the House of Representatives decided to celebrate Mother Earth a few days early by passing yet another bill, HR 4348, to pillage and plunder what is still left of her. As usual, our elected leaders chose to tack approval of the highly controversial Keystone XL pipeline onto an unrelated, urgent matter. This time, highway funding, to try to coerce authorization for a project so dangerous, it could never obtain approval on its own.

While not at all surprising, the outcome of Wednesday's activities in the House is certainly disappointing. The Republican vote was predictable; misguided and unjustifiable, but predictable. I actually find the split among the Democrats to be more unsettling. 113 Democrats voted against the bill, but 69 voted for it. The fraudulent propaganda being pushed on us to protect the obscene profits of the oil industry seems to be taking its toll on both sides of the aisle. As persistent as Congress has been (I can count at least five bills that have been considered over the past few months containing language approving the KXL pipeline - and that doesn't include failed amendments), this dangerous game Congress is playing will be taking its toll on our children and our earth if we don't take a stand and put a stop to it.

Every single one of the seven Representatives, from South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Nebraska, and Wyoming, whose state boundaries encompass parts of the Great Sioux Nation voted in favor of the bill. All seven of these legislators voted to violate a lawful treaty with the United States (the 1868 Ft. Laramie Treaty - see Article 2). All seven of these legislators voted to allow a corporation to desecrate land which is sacred to the Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota people they claim to "represent." All seven of these legislators voted to put campaign contributions oil company profits ahead of human life and fundamental human rights of Americans from Montana to Texas. And they had 286 co-conspirators voting with them in favor of these violations of human rights!

In Oklahoma, formerly known as Indian Territory, all five Representatives voted in favor of the bill, which would allow TransCanada to literally trench indigenous lands known or believed to contain graves and sacred sites of the Sac & Fox and the Caddo, among others. Out of Texas, which encompasses sacred Caddo land in the potential path of destruction, 18 of the 23 Representatives voted yes on HR4348. TransCanada has already declared its intent to construct the southern leg of Keystone XL (through Oklahoma and Texas) as a separate project, independent of the international border-crossing segment that would run through Montana, South Dakota, and Nebraska. The threat to lands in Oklahoma and Texas is imminent, regardless of the House transportation bill, but individuals are fighting fiercely to protect those lands. If those individuals succeed in stopping the construction of the isolated southern pipeline segment, they will still be fighting this battle against unjust legislation like HR4348.

If built, the Keystone XL pipeline will spill. If approved, construction of the Keystone XL pipeline will desecrate sacred lands, sites, and likely burials. If passed by the Senate and signed by the President, HR 4348 will violate treaties and human rights. These are facts. As stewards of Mother Earth, we cannot let this happen.

It is now up to us to stop the madness. As TransCanada has clearly demonstrated, money means power in politics. But we hold the one thing our elected leaders value even more than money; we have our votes. This bill, HR4348, still needs approval by the Senate and the signature of the President. Now is the time to speak up, and our voices must be louder than ever.

Contact your United States Senators. Contact the President. Send emails, send letters, make phone calls, circulate petitions; tell friends and family to do the same. Our elected leaders must understand that if they won't protect the rights of their constituents, come election time, we can and we shall find individuals who will.

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