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February 10, 2012

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters, we write to express our vehement opposition to any and all legislation that would approve the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline. The Keystone XL pipeline would transport toxic tar sands from under Canada's Boreal forest 1,700 miles to the Gulf of Mexico to be refined and exported. President Obama firmly rejected the permit for this project last month. Pending legislation would effectively turn Congress into a permitting authority, bypassing a robust environmental and safety review and approving a project for which a route has not even yet been determined. These efforts must be rejected. Congress should not be in the business of short-circuiting environmental and safety reviews to permit the individual pet projects of big oil.

The environmental and safety dangers from the pipeline are clear. First, tar sands oil is the most carbon-intensive source of oil on the planet—the production process alone generates three times as much global warming pollution as conventional crude oil. Developing tar sands is also destroying important forest lands that act as a carbon reservoir, further contributing to climate change. The Environmental Protection Agency has estimated that the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline would contribute an additional 27 million metric tons of CO₂ annually – or the same amount of global warming pollution created by adding 4.8 million vehicles to the road, which would accelerate health impacts from global warming that are already occurring.

Moreover, the pipeline would do little for our energy security. Its main purpose is to make this oil available for export. Keystone XL would divert Canadian oil from refineries in the Midwest to the Gulf Coast. These refineries are in Foreign Trade Zones where oil may be exported to international buyers *without* paying U.S. taxes.

By redirecting oil that is currently being shipped to the Midwest, Keystone XL would also serve to increase the price of fuel in the Midwest by \$4-6 billion dollars in the first year of operation alone¹. This increase in price has caused farmers across the country to voice their opposition to this dangerous and costly project.

¹ Keystone XL Pipeline Section 52 Application, Section 3: Supply and Markets. Available at <https://www.neb-one.gc.ca/ll-eng/Livelink.exe/fetch/2000/90464/90552/418396/550305/556487/549220/B-1f - Supply and Markets %28Tab 3%29 incl. Appendix 3.1 - A1I9R7?nodeid=549324&vernum=0&redirect=3>

Finally, the pipeline itself poses grave dangers to America's vital water resources. Tar sands oil is more acidic and corrosive than conventional oil and transported under higher pressure, posing a far greater risk of leaks along the pipeline route. This is not just a theoretical problem. Over the last five years, pipelines in Midwestern states with the longest history of moving Canadian tar sands have spilled three times as much crude per pipeline mile as the national average. The Keystone I tar sands pipeline was predicted to spill 1.4 times per decade, yet spilled fourteen times in its first year of operation. Last summer, an older pipeline system carrying tar sands oil spilled more than 800,000 gallons into Michigan's Kalamazoo River, causing health effects in a majority of Calhoun County residents living adjacent to the river. At a cost of over \$725 million, this spill has been the most expensive U.S. pipeline accident on record.

The facts reveal this pipeline was never in America's national interest. Clean energy and fuel efficiency is the path forward for economic and energy security in America – not another tar sands pipeline. By rejecting the Keystone XL pipeline, President Obama helped move America down a cleaner, safer path.

Congress is now considering legislation that would preempt America's environmental laws to approve a pipeline for which a route does not exist. With this precedent, will the next Congress approve a project in your state while preempting the health, environmental, and safety laws that protect your citizens and your state's farmlands? We urge all members to oppose any and all attempts to pass legislation that would short circuit the laws our nation has relied on to balance development with protecting our country for future generations.

Sincerely,

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