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The Truth about the Keystone Pipeline

Last week, the Platte Institute published a guest article by Ron Kaminski of Laborers Local 1140 to discuss the immense economic benefits that would be derived from the building of the Keystone Pipeline. On Tuesday, the Platte Institute expanded on this theme as we released our new Policy Study, "The Keystone XL Oil Pipeline-True Facts." This paper aims to dispel the lies surrounding the controversial pipeline with solid, factual evidence attesting to how the pipeline is safe, secure, and poses no danger to the environment and the Ogallala Aquifer in particular.

Many of the claims made by opponents of the pipeline are grossly inaccurate, and the study aims to rectify and educate on thirteen of the most common false statements.

False Claim: An alternate route would be safer.

True Fact: An alternative route from the one currently proposed would be more dangerous, the one currently proposed is the safest one available. The Ogallala Aquifer is not a giant underground lake as is often misconstrued, the aquifer is actually a composition of gravel, silt, sediment, sand, and stone in which water is held. This composition acts as a filter to dirt and oil, and can even act as a barrier and protect the water within the Aquifer. Several studies by the State Department and by experts like hydrogeologist Jim Goeke and geologist Bob Diffendal have stated that of all the routes considered, the current proposed route is the safest for the environment and people along the route.

False Claim: Canadian Tar Sands oil is sandy, dirty, and corrosive.

True Fact: Oil from tar sands is very similar to oil already transported throughout the United States. The process of refining tar sands oil is verifiable, and exploration, production, and exportation of such oil has already begun. Indeed, Canada is already America's largest supplier of oil and natural gas, and this oil can be made into many useful items like asphalt, gasoline, and jet fuel.

False Claim: The Keystone XL Pipeline is unsafe

True Fact: The Pipeline will be very safe, using new technology to insure the best safety and environmental standards. Continual electronic and manual monitoring will insure the integrity of the pipeline and the volume of oil being transported has even been lowered to 1308 psi, well under federal regulation, in order to prevent unsafe pressure levels. Also, TransCanada has a financial incentive to keep the pipeline safe, as the Legislature passed LB 629 in the last session which holds TransCanada as solely financially responsible for any problems that may arise.

False Claim: The Keystone XL Pipeline is bad for the environment

True Fact: Two environmental impact studies have already said that the pipeline would meet all environmental and safety standards. The State Department also concluded after a 30 month study that there was no scientific evidence to justify the denial of a permit for the pipeline. Furthermore, other studies have shown that carbon dioxide emissions from oil sands are about the same as those from other oil like Venezuelan and Nigerian crude. Also, shipping oil through a pipeline is environmentally much safer than shipping it overseas, which is currently the case as oil is shipped from the Middle East to the United States. These shipments pose a far greater environmental risk, so, from an environmental standpoint, an overland pipeline would be preferable to overseas shipment methods.

False Claim: The proposed pipeline puts the Ogallala Aquifer at risk

True Fact: As hydrogeologist Jim Goeke, an aquifer expert at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, has noted several times, any spill from the pipeline would be extremely limited and not affect the aquifer in general. Any leak in the pipeline would only affect "10's or 100's of feet around the pipeline." The very structure of the aquifer as a composite collection of porous rock, sand, and sediment makes it so that oil could not permeate the general aquifer. Furthermore, the Keystone pipeline currently going through Nebraska and over the Ogallala Aquifer has suffered zero leaks, and all reported spills were pumping malfunctions and done no damage to the aquifer. Nationally, ten of the twelve leak accidents involving pipes have measured only between five and ten gallons, a very negligible amount that can be easily cleaned and very localized.

False Claim: The steel for the pipeline is too thin

True Fact: The new XL pipeline will use steel stronger than that used in the existing Keystone Pipeline. The steel to be used on the new pipeline will be tested to withstand 125 percent of allowable pressure, if it cannot withstand 125 percent then it will not be used. State of the art emergency response teams will also be on stand-by for any possibilities of a leak.

False Claim: The oil in the pipeline will be heated and damage the environment

True Fact: TransCanada's company policy does not allow for the heating of oil within the pipeline. Any heat released will be the result of friction, seasons, and the normal transportation process. By not heating the oil any other way, the oil temperature will fall

below regulation standards.

False Claim: The pipeline will not create as many jobs as predicted

True Fact: Economic surveys have already reported that the construction of the pipeline should create 20,000 high paying manufacturing jobs, 7,500 of those to Nebraska specifically. It will also boost private sector investment by \$20 billion; states along the route are estimated to receive around \$585 million in new tax revenues.

False Claim: The new pipeline will not insure energy independence

True Fact: Currently, more than half of America's oil comes from countries deemed as hostile. Using oil from a friendly nation like Canada is good national security policy. Also, having a pipeline from a friendly neighbor may not achieve energy independence in a single day; it will be a good step in weaning the United States off an addiction to oil from hostile nations like Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Venezuela.

False Claim: The Keystone XL is a pipeline through the United States to foreign markets; the oil will not stay here.

True Fact: All the oil sent through the pipeline will be processed in American refineries. Also, it is better financially for TransCanada to sell to American markets, as it is cheaper to do so. However, if the pipeline is not built, it is far more likely that foreign nations will be eager to buy this oil.

False Claim: TransCanada is doing this to manipulate the supply of crude and thereby gas prices

True Fact: TransCanada cannot control gas prices, and the international price of oil does not affect oil lines.

False Claim: The intended route was chosen simply because it was cheap.

True Fact: The proposed route was chosen because it is both the shortest and safest route to get the oil to American refineries, most of which are located in Oklahoma and Texas. The State Department has already verified this route as the safest, and TransCanada has experience with sensitive areas like the Sand Hills through work in Saskatchewan, Oregon, and South Dakota.

False Claim: TransCanada is bullying landowners and seizing their land

True Fact: Over 90 percent of affected landowners in Nebraska have entered into voluntary easement agreements with TransCanada. These agreements provide additional income to Nebraska landowners. Where eminent domain is used, independent government groups are consulted to determine fair compensation. Owners always retain

procession of their property, and fair compensation is given.

The full policy study may be downloaded [HERE](#)



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