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Senate gives a big, fat thumbs-up to Keystone XL

By Lisa Hymas



350.org

The Senate was not listening to these guys.

The vote was non-binding but all too telling. On Friday, the U.S. Senate voted 62 to 37 in favor of building the Keystone XL tar-sands pipeline, with 17 Democrats joining all of the Republicans. It was just an amendment to a budget plan that won't even be going to the president's desk, but it shows that the political class in D.C. views the pipeline very favorably — and believes voters view it very favorably too.

From *The Washington Post*:

The 17 Democrats who voted yes included every single possibly vulnerable incumbent facing reelection next year, from 34-year veteran [Max] Baucus [Mont.] to first-term Sen. Mark Begich (Alaska).

Perhaps more importantly, Sen. Michael Bennet (Colo.), who chairs the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, voted for the resolution. Bennet is not up for re-election until 2016, but his post requires him to raise money from the wealthy liberal community that is highly opposed to the pipeline.

Additionally, a crop of Democrats who survived difficult reelections in 2012 — Sens. Bob Casey (Pa.), Joe Donnelly (Ind.), Heidi Heitkamp (N.D.), Claire McCaskill (Mo.), Bill Nelson (Fla.) and Jon Tester (Mont.) — all supported the GOP Keystone amendment.

Did fossil-fuel money have anything to do with the vote? You be the judge:

New analysis today from Oil Change International reveals that supporters of the just-passed non-binding Keystone XL pipeline amendment received 3.5 times more in campaign contributions from fossil fuel interests than those voting “no.” In total, researchers found that supporters took an average of \$499,648 from the industry before voting for the pipeline, for a staggering total of \$30,978,153.

The Keystone decision still ultimately rests with President Obama, who appears to be dithering — and procrastinating like mad. From *The Hill*:

In meetings with Obama last week, House and Senate Republicans pressed the president for a timeline on his decision — about which Obama was vague. ...

Obama has been noncommittal on Keystone. According to some Senate Republicans present at last week's confab, the president said his decision would come by year's end.

On top of that, the president told the GOP their claims about Keystone's job creation prospects were exaggerated. He also suggested a good amount of the oil sands were destined for export. ...

Republicans also said Obama told them last week that environmentalists' fears of Keystone's impact on the climate were overblown.

Climate activists at 350.org, who've been leading the anti-Keystone charge, plan to let senators know what they think while the lawmakers are back in their home districts for a recess over the next two weeks.

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