

# Competing Interests Complicate Keystone Pipeline Decision For Obama

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Labor and environmental groups are both pressuring President Obama over his soon-expected decision on [whether or not to permit the creation of the Keystone Pipeline](#), a 1,700 mile conduit that will transport oil from Canada to the Gulf Coast through several Midwestern states.

Business and labor groups are lobbying in support of the \$7 billion Keystone Pipeline plan because [they say it will create hundreds of thousands of jobs and make the U.S. more energy secure](#). Environmental groups, though, oppose it because they say extracting the oil from Canada's "tar sands" produces more greenhouse gases. They further claim that there is the danger that potential pipeline spills could contaminate water sources and farmland in states where the pipeline would travel through.

Last week President Obama's [Jobs Council gave cautious support to the project](#), stating that a balanced approach can be made which realizes the benefits of the pipeline while at the same time addressing environmental protection concerns:

Environmental and safety concerns have sparked controversy over specific energy developments, including a pipeline that would transport heavy oil from northern Alberta in Canada to Oklahoma and the Gulf Coast, the resumption of deepwater drilling in the Gulf of Mexico, and horizontal drilling and hydrofracturing of shale gas supplies. Estimates suggest that these three streams of private investment, could together support or preserve hundreds of thousands of jobs in the next few years. The Jobs Council urges all stakeholders to make extraordinary efforts to strike an intelligent balance that protects people, safety, the environment, and our nation's water supplies, while also allowing the economic benefits of these innovations to be realized.

Pro-environment activists are particularly fervent in their opposition to the pipeline. About 1,250 anti-pipeline demonstrators were arrested while protesting in front of the White House in late August and early September. Several pro-environment Obama donors have said they will not financially support the President's 2012 campaign if he approves the project. At a recent Obama fundraiser in S. Louis, two students yelled out "[Please stop the pipeline!](#)" while the President was speaking.

At a recent hearing on the Keystone Pipeline held by the State Department, numerous supporters and opponents spoke on the matter. Among the attendees were hundreds of members of the Laborers' International Union of North America who showed up to support the pipeline project.

“Our members are in dire need of paychecks,” said Brent Booker who directs the union’s construction department. He added that the project will provide “thousands of jobs” for his union’s members.

Because the pipeline would cross an international border, the State Department must sign off on the permit allowing the project to move forward. A decision is expected before the end of the year.

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