



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on January 3, 2012

Stage Is Set for Keystone Pipeline Debate in 2012

As reported in an [earlier story](#) by *The New American's* Brian Koenig, "The Keystone XL pipeline is a \$7-billion expansion which would transport Canadian crude oil from Alberta southeast through the U.S. Midwest, and then on to the Gulf Coast."



The *Washington Post* [reported](#), President Obama had demanded that Congress extend the tax holiday, but Republicans had refused to go along unless the White House agreed to an accelerated decision on the pipeline.

The White House has already indicated that it would rather say no to the pipeline than rush a decision on the subject in an election year.

CNS News [explains](#) the Presidents dilemma: The \$7 billion pipeline poses a political trap for Obama because it divides his supporters. Environmentalists oppose the project while most labor unions support it. Republicans say Obama's stance shows he favors environmentalists over jobs.

Business Insider [expands on this idea](#):

Once completed, Keystone XL will be able to supply half the amount of oil the U.S. currently imports from the Middle East or Venezuela.

With the prospect of jobs and energy security for the taking, officials and trade unions are looking to quickly approve the project.

On the other hand, environmentalists have warned of future spills and damage to sandhills. Coming after the Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico, and [Exxon Mobil's](#) July pipeline spill in Montana, environmental impact has become a crucial part of the debate.

In November, the Obama administration decided it would seek a new route for the pipeline, delaying the decision beyond the 2012 elections. That decision assuaged environmentalist concerns about the carbon emissions, and concerns from ranchers and other citizens about oil spills.

But now the tax deal brings the pipeline back to the forefront of political debate.

Despite the controversy, however, the majority of Americans are in support of the pipeline, according to a Rasmussen Report [survey](#). Fifty-percent of likely voters at least somewhat favor moving ahead with the project, though that figure is down from 60 percent in November. The poll asked the following questions regarding the pipeline:

How closely have you followed recent news reports about the payroll tax cut debate in Congress?

Do you strongly favor, somewhat favor, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose building the Keystone XL pipeline?

The *Vancouver Sun* [writes](#) of the results:



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The Rasmussen telephone survey of 1,000 likely voters nationwide showed that more than 70 per cent of Republicans still support the Keystone pipeline, with Tea Party members overwhelmingly in favour of building it. But unaffiliated voters backing the project fell from 61 per cent in November to 49 per cent in the latest survey.

At the time of the first survey, only about 60 per cent of surveyed voters were following the pipeline issue at least somewhat closely. In the second, Rasmussen found about 80 per cent were following the payroll tax cut debate, which included the Keystone XL issue.

Even as Congress has forced Obama to decide on the pipeline more quickly, the President could delay it once again, or even kill the plan entirely.



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