



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on February 21, 2013

John Kerry Addresses Global Warming in First Foreign Policy Speech

In his first major foreign policy speech on Wednesday, newly appointed Secretary of State John Kerry delivered a rather unconventional introduction, arguing that Americans need to garner up the “courage” to tackle climate change. Emphasizing security measures that are necessary to maintain national security, Kerry added that new environmental policies and investments in “green” energy technologies should be a priority for his department.



“We as a nation must have the foresight and courage to make the investments necessary to safeguard the most sacred trust we keep for our children and grandchildren,” he [said](#), highlighting the “catastrophic” impact climate change will have on future generations: “An environment not ravaged by rising seas, deadly superstorms, devastating droughts, and the other hallmarks of a dramatically changing climate.”

The secretary of state called for collective action to curb the “detrimental” effects of climate change, as he propagated a doomsday scenario where sea levels rise and rising temperatures wreak havoc on the Earth:

And let’s face it — we are all in this one together. No nation can stand alone. We share nothing so completely as our planet. When we work with others — large and small — to develop and deploy the clean technologies that will power a new world, we’re also helping create new markets and new opportunities for America’s second-to-none innovators and entrepreneurs to succeed in the next great revolution.

So let’s commit ourselves to doing the smart thing and the right thing and truly commit to tackling this challenge. Because if we don’t rise to meet it, rising temperatures and rising sea levels will surely lead to rising costs down the road. If we waste this opportunity, it may be the only thing our generations are remembered for. We need to find the courage to leave a far different legacy.

Kerry’s contentious delivery, given despite the [utter lack](#) of [proof](#) of [its claims](#), poses yet another potentially menacing sign for TransCanada’s Keystone XL pipeline, the 1,700-mile Canada-U.S. pipeline that will transport Canadian crude oil from the Athabasca Oil Sands in northeastern Alberta, Canada, southeast through the U.S. Midwest, and then all the way down to the Gulf Coast.

The Keystone pipeline was originally proposed in February 2005, and has since been plagued by persistent delays on part of the Canadian and U.S. governments. The privately funded, shovel-ready project began piping oil to Illinois and Missouri in 2010, while phase II of the project (launched in February 2011) would extend from Steele City, Nebraska, to Cushing, Oklahoma. As The New American has extensively [reported](#), the Keystone XL extension has undergone a number of tests by the State Department, yet the Obama administration has yet to approve the economically paramount undertaking:



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Though the pipeline has been in operation for almost a year, a new segment of the project, the Keystone Gulf Coast Expansion, also known as Keystone XL — which would originate in Hardisty, Alberta, and run southeast through Montana, South Dakota, and Nebraska, while incorporating Phase II of the pipeline to extend to Texas and Oklahoma markets — is facing formidable hurdles. The Canadian government's National Energy Board approved the expansion in 2010, but is awaiting final approval from the Obama administration.

While Kerry did not specifically reference Keystone XL in his speech, the federal agency he now heads will soon decide the pipeline's ultimate fate, as it crosses an international border. American environmentalists have been adamant in their opposition to the pipeline, calling on the Obama administration to sequester the flow of what they call "dirty oil."

And there have been signs that the boisterous overtures from environmentalists and liberal advocacy groups are not falling on deaf ears in the Obama White House, as the president remains steadfast in his purported opposition to global warming. Indeed, David Jacobson, the U.S. ambassador to Canada, asserted last week that Obama's pledge to take aggressive action on environmental concerns during his State of the Union address was, in part, a challenge to the Canadian government and its backing of the Keystone pipeline extension.

However, Canada's foreign affairs minister John Baird responded that the United States should observe Canada's numerous measures on the climate-change front, particularly in the area of coal. "We're the only country in the world that's committed to getting out of the dirty coal electricity generation business," Baird [affirmed](#). "These are real meaningful steps that will either meet or even exceed the work that's been done thus far in the United States."

Kerry's Wednesday dialogue arrived only two weeks after his meeting at the State Department with Baird, and Kerry was non-committal about the pipeline in a news conference with Baird. Moreover, he was relatively tepid in his support for the project, according to sources close to the meeting.

The former Massachusetts senator, a determined climate hawk during his 28-year congressional tenure, championed his role as America's chief diplomat to advocate clean-energy technologies that could thrust U.S. businesses into the "next great revolution in our marketplace."

"We need to commit ourselves to doing the smart thing and the right thing and to truly take on this challenge, because if we don't rise to meet it, then rising temperatures and rising sea levels will surely lead to rising costs down the road," he warned.

Speculation has risen over whether the Obama administration is seeking a kickback for the White House's decision to approve the Keystone XL pipeline, like a greenhouse-gas emissions levy that would be imposed at the U.S.-Canada border. Regardless, Republicans and industry proponents worry that the White House will fold under pressure from the president's constituents — despite the tens of thousands of jobs the pipeline would create and the potential to wean ourselves off oil from terrorist regimes in the Middle East.



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