



Obama's War on Our Energy Independence

After three weeks of debate, the Senate finally passed a bill last week to authorize the Keystone XL pipeline. The vote was 62-36, which means that nine Democrats joined 53 Senate Republicans in voting "yes" on the measure to complete a pipeline from Canada to the Gulf Coast. The bill now goes to a House-Senate conference committee to iron out minor differences with the version approved in the House of Representatives late last year.

It's worth noting that during the debate over the measure, the Senate considered 43 different amendments to the bill. This means the Senate debated more amendments in one month on this one bill than it did in all of last year on every bill that came before the Senate. What a difference now that Harry Reid (D-Nev.) is no longer Senate majority leader and can't bottle up any measure he and President Obama didn't like!

The president has vowed to veto the measure when it does finally reach his desk. And it doesn't look like the bill's supporters have enough votes in the Senate to override that veto. Five other Democrats would have to split with their party's leadership to do that.

But preventing the Keystone pipeline from being completed is only part of the war that Obama is conducting against energy independence in this country. Even more significant are measures the president has taken that could mean the end of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline.

A week ago, the president announced that he was using his executive authority to designate some 12 million acres in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (otherwise known as ANWR) as "wilderness." Such a designation would prohibit any exploration for oil and gas in that vast area.

Such a directive flies in the face of a law passed by Congress in 1980. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act agreed to put huge tracts of land in Alaska off-limits to exploration. But the bill also included a clause declaring that there would be "no more wilderness designations" in Alaska unless they were specifically approved by Congress. The president's latest dictate ignores that long-standing agreement.

But this is far from the only way the Obama Administration is blocking oil and gas exploration in Alaska. Back in 2010, it ordered nearly half of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR) off-limits to development.

Plus, Obama's minions are doing everything possible to stymie drilling in areas of Alaska where it has already been approved. Shell Oil has spent an estimated \$6 billion on plans to drill in the Chukchi and



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Beaufort Seas areas of Alaska, but federal regulators have thrown up so many roadblocks that the company can't proceed.

The same thing has happened to ConocoPhillips, which years ago bought a lease to explore in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. So far, the federal regulators in charge have refused to allow the company to drill a single well. And that is certainly unlikely to change while Obama is in office.

When the Trans-Alaska Pipeline was completed, back in the mid-1970s, it carried some 2.2 million barrels of oil a day the 800 miles from the northern slope of Alaska to the Port of Valdez on the southern coast. Now, thanks to decreasing production from existing wells, that number has dropped to half-a-million barrels a day.

Environmental extremists know that the economic viability of the pipeline is at risk here. If they can squeeze production even further, it is possible that the pipeline may be closed.

But here's the kicker: Under the law that established it, if the TransAlaska Pipeline shuts down, *it will have to be dismantled*. This would be a devastating blow to the possibility of America becoming energy independent.

Experts say that there is something like 27 billion barrels of oil in the Arctic Outer Continental Shelf. ANWR is thought to hold another 10 billion barrels. The National Petroleum Reserve probably holds an equal amount.

That is almost 50 billion barrels of oil this country could be producing. Yet thanks to the Obama administration, we are not getting a single drop.

And don't even get me started on the administration's war on coal, the most abundant energy resource we have in this country. We should be encouraging efforts to find cleaner ways to use this fuel; instead, Obama has made it clear that he won't be satisfied until every coal-producing mine in this country has been closed and every coal-burning plant has been shuttered.

What will it take to promote energy independence in this country? A change of heart by the present occupant of the White House seems extremely unlikely. So the only other option is a change of occupant.

Frankly, it can't happen soon enough.

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