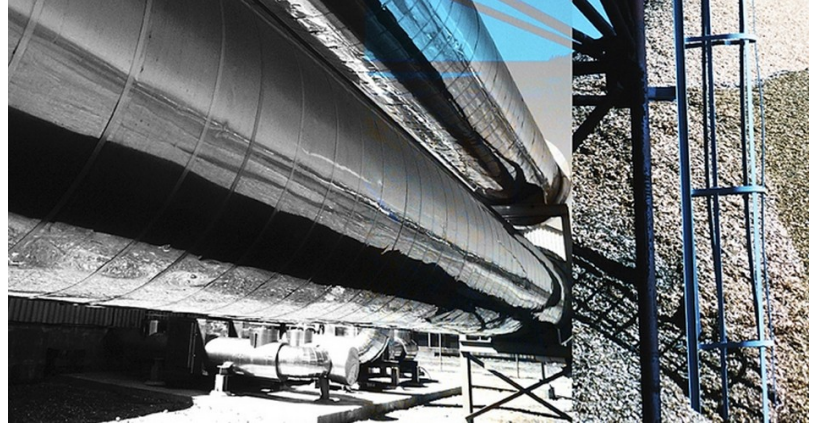




Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on February 12, 2015

Despite Cronyism, Keystone XL Bill Passes House, Faces Veto Showdown

The House of Representatives voted 270 to 152 on Wednesday in favor of the Keystone XL oil pipeline legislation. However, without the necessary two-thirds majority, or 281 votes, it is likely President Obama will veto the bill, setting the stage for the first veto showdown between Obama and the Republican-controlled Congress. Representative Justin Amash of Michigan was the only Republican to vote against the legislation, citing concerns over the bill's "cronyism."



Keystone XL is a pipeline designed to move oil from Canada to the Gulf Coast. Democrats and environmentalists have opposed construction of the pipeline, citing environmental concerns including climate change, even as the State Department released a report last year that determined that the pipeline would not worsen climate change. Republicans have long advocated for the pipeline, asserting that the project would create tens of thousands of jobs in the oil industry, and that the construction alone would have created 20,000 jobs.

Fox News reports that the bill had passed in the House earlier this year, after which it moved to the Senate, where it was also approved. The bill then returned to the House for a final vote to reconcile the two separate versions.

The bill failed to acquire the necessary two-thirds vote required to override a veto.

On Wednesday night, a White House official declared Obama's intent to veto the bill, but Congress intends to forge ahead with the legislation. According to a senior Senate Republican source, Republicans are not expecting to send the bill to the White House for another two weeks so that they can guarantee Congress is in session when the bill is likely vetoed.

Republican Senator John Hoeven from North Dakota, architect of the Keystone XL bill, states that the GOP is expecting a veto, but that Republican leaders intend to attach Keystone measures to other pieces of legislation if necessary. "We can attach it to other bills — energy, appropriations, the highway bill."

But while all Republicans seem to agree that the Keystone pipeline is a valuable asset, not all agree with the legislation that sets the stage for its construction.

Representative Justin Amash was the lone Republican who voted against the legislation approving construction for the Keystone XL pipeline. Since [2013](#), he has argued against simply giving TransCanada, the builder of Keystone, an exemption from government permits. Following Wednesday's vote, he took to his Facebook to explain his position:

The latest #KXL bill combines the cronyism of previous bills — specially exempting one private company from the laws and regulations that apply to all other companies — with new, unrelated



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sections empowering the EPA and the federal government with respect to local energy efficiency.

Amash is reiterating claims he made weeks ago, when the House voted to approve Keystone. At the time, he said he was “present” but did not vote yes on the bill, stating that while he supports the Keystone bill on its merits, “It’s improper ... for Congress to write a bill that names and benefits one private project while doing nothing to address the underlying problems that allowed such delays to occur.”

“The Constitution gives Congress the power to ‘regulate Commerce with foreign Nations,’ but the Rule of Law requires that legislation be of general, not specific, applicability,” he added.

Amash, who writes explanations for each vote he takes, continued his explanation by providing a brief but concise review of republicanism, reminding his colleagues of what many of them may have forgotten:

As F.A. Hayek explained in *The Constitution of Liberty*: “It is because the lawgiver does not know the particular cases to which his rules will apply, and it is because the judge who applies them has no choice in drawing the conclusions that follow from the existing body of rules and the particular facts of the case, that it can be said that laws and not men rule. Because the rule is laid down in ignorance of the particular case and no man’s will decides the coercion used to enforce it, the law is not arbitrary. This, however, is true only if by ‘law’ we mean the general rules that apply equally to everybody. This generality is probably the most important aspect of that attribute of law which we have called its ‘abstractness.’ As a true law should not name any particulars, so it should especially not single out any specific persons or group of persons.”

Meanwhile, the future for the Keystone XL pipeline remains to be seen.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has implored President Obama to reconsider the veto threat, while House Speaker John Boehner has accused the president of siding with the Left against the American people. “Instead of listening to the people, the president is standing with a bunch of left-fringe extremists and anarchists,” Boehner told reporters on Wednesday. “The president needs to listen to the American people and say: ‘Yes, let’s build a Keystone pipeline.’”



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