



*Standing Rock, North Dakota. (photo: ChuckModi/Twitter)*

## Trump Signs Executive Actions to Advance Keystone, Dakota Access Pipelines

By Andrew Restuccia and Josh Dawsey, Politico, 24 January 17

<http://bcove.me/2qukyn9j>

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President Donald Trump signed executive actions on Tuesday to advance the Keystone XL and Dakota Access oil pipelines, reversing decisions made by the Obama administration and setting off a clash with Democrats and environmental activists who vehemently oppose the projects.

Trump said that approving the cross-border oil line would be “subject to a renegotiation of terms by us,” comments that suggest that he plans to revive his campaign-trail bid to claim “a piece of the profits” from the pipeline for U.S. taxpayers — a legally and politically [risky](#) proposal.

Keystone XL, which was rejected by former President Barack Obama in 2015, has been at the center of one of the largest opposition campaigns in the history of the environmental movement, with activists conducting a years-long effort to kill the project. During the presidential campaign, Trump repeatedly promised to approve Keystone XL, which would carry Canadian oil sands crude from Alberta to Texas, and he said [he wants](#) the U.S. government to get 25 percent of the pipeline's profits.

Another of the executive actions signed on Tuesday was aimed at identifying high priority infrastructure projects and speeding the required environmental reviews that Trump blamed for slowing construction of important infrastructure projects.

"The regulatory process in this country has become a tangled up mess. And very unfair to people," Trump told reporters gathered in the Oval Office.

"We intend to fix our country, our bridges, our roadways. We can't be in an environmental process for 15 years if a bridge is going to be falling down or if a highway is crumbling. So we're expediting environmental reviews and approvals," he added.

And he said the materials used to build the pipelines in the U.S. should come from American companies — a move that would put "a lot of steelworkers" back to work, although the memo says only that the Commerce Secretary should submit a plan within 180 days use U.S. steel "the maximum extent possible and to the extent permitted by law."

"We will build our own pipeline, we will build our own pipes. That's what it has to do with. Like we used to, in the old days," he said.

Building the Keystone XL pipeline would also be a boon for Trump's friend and early energy adviser Harold Hamm, the founder and CEO of Continental Resources, the oil company that is the biggest oil producer in North Dakota's Bakken field. The pipeline would help transport oil from those wells, which have relied in the past on trains to get the crude to customers.

"My goodness, that's a pipeline that is certainly needed. It brings the best, highest quality crude oil from the Bakken to the population centers," Hamm told an industry event in December.

TransCanada said the day after Trump's election that it "remains fully committed to building Keystone XL" but has publicly offered no details since about when it would re-apply for the border-crossing permit that the new president invited on Tuesday. Keystone has come up during meetings between Trump aides and officials of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government, a source told POLITICO.

Trump's memo invites TransCanada to "promptly" resubmit its Keystone XL application and it directs the State Department to make a decision on the project within 60 days.

It was not immediately clear if Trump was altering the 2004 George W. Bush administration order that requires a broad inter-agency review of cross-border pipeline projects led by the State Department, but simplifying that process move that would make it easier to approve Keystone.

While Trump has long been expected to take steps to approve Keystone, two people familiar with the issue said Trump administration officials have had little communication with the State Department in the runup to the executive actions. One of those people said State did not sign off on the executive actions.

Building Keystone XL faces a number of obstacles. The pipeline is still awaiting approval from Nebraska state regulators for its proposed route, and many landowners in the state are opposed to the project.

"There's so many other things that come along with Keystone XL that Trump is going to have to deal with: that it's foreign oil, that they're using foreign steel and they're using eminent domain to take land away from people who voted for him," said Nebraska-based anti-Keystone activist Jane Kleeb. "I think Trump is not prepared for the amount of protests from Nebraska Republicans that are coming his way."

The planned 1,100-mile Dakota Access pipeline, which would run from North Dakota to Illinois, has also become a focal point of progressive opposition to fossil fuel

projects. Native American tribes joined with activists in protests that have occasionally turned violent and caught national attention over the last few months.

The Standing Rock Sioux, which has been at the center of the protests because of the threat the tribe says the pipeline poses to its water supply, said Trump's order violates previous agreements they had struck with the federal government.

"President Trump is legally required to honor our treaty rights and provide a fair and reasonable pipeline process," Dave Archambault II, chairman of the tribe, said in a statement. "Americans know this pipeline was unfairly rerouted towards our nation and without our consent. The existing pipeline route risks infringing on our treaty rights, contaminating our water and the water of 17 million Americans downstream."

Any move to approve the pipelines will face legal challenges from environmental groups, and Democrats and activists immediately bashed Trump over the pending actions.

Jamie Henn, co-founder of the environmental group 350.org, promised that greens will fight Trump.

"We're going to fight Keystone XL and Dakota Access along the route, but we're also going to jiu jitsu this attack into energy to take on fossil fuel infrastructure all across the country," he said.

"While countries like China and Germany continue to make progress in their transition away from the dirty energy of the past, this action will roll back the progress we have made," Sen. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii) said in a statement. "Encouraging the production of this oil, which includes Canadian tar sands – one of the dirtiest fuels in the world -- is a huge step backward."

Trump previously owned between \$15,000 and \$50,000 of stock in Energy Transfer Partners, the company behind the Dakota Access pipeline. A Trump spokeswoman told reporters last year that he sold his stake in the company. Rick Perry, Trump's nominee for energy secretary, sat on Energy Transfer Partners' board, but he resigned earlier this month.

Earlier Tuesday at a meeting with auto industry executives, Trump criticized the sometimes lengthy process required to secure environmental permits required to build infrastructure projects.

"Our friends that wanna build in the United States, they go many, many years and then they can't get the environmental permit over something that nobody ever heard of before," he said. "And it's absolutely crazy. I am, to a large extent, an environmentalist. I believe in it. But it's out of control."