

The President has said repeatedly that jobs are his top priority. He says he wakes up every morning thinking about how he can create jobs. Yet here is the single greatest shovel-ready project in America ready to go, and for some reason he is suddenly not interested.

I have a question: How is it that when it comes to taxpayer-subsidized jobs that may or may not materialize, the President tells us we can't wait, we have to do it tomorrow, but when it comes to private sector jobs that are ready to go immediately, he is in no rush? It doesn't make any sense, particularly when we look at some of the President's past statements.

Here are a couple of examples. President Obama said earlier this year:

For those—just to give a background to folks, there are these tar sands in Canada that can produce oil. There is talk about building a pipeline into the United States to import that oil.

This is the President. He said:

I will make this general point, which is that, first of all, importing oil from countries that are stable and friendly is a good thing.

That is the President, and I agree with him.

The President also said earlier this year—a statement of the obvious:

We're still going to have to import some oil.

Boy, are we.

And when it comes to the oil we import from other nations, obviously we've got to look at neighbors like Canada and Mexico that are stable and steady and reliable sources.

That was the President earlier this year.

So the President has correctly said, in my view, that he favors importing oil from allies and neighbors. Here is a project that would enable us to do that and do a lot more of it and create thousands of jobs in the process. What is the problem?

Last Friday, Americans woke up to the news that for the 34th month in a row, the unemployment rate in this country has stood above 8 percent—a period of joblessness not seen since the Great Depression. The least they can expect from Washington is that we will not stand in the way of people who want to hire. Yet that is exactly what they are getting from this President when it comes to this pipeline. This project has been under review for years—3 years—including two exhaustive environmental evaluations. By all accounts, the State Department was ready to give it the green light by the end of this year—this month.

What happened? Well, it appears Presidential politics got in the way. The President started getting heat from the environmental activists he is counting on to stuff envelopes next year, so he conveniently put off the decision until right after next year's election.

So if this episode tells us anything, it is that the President is clearly more

concerned about getting himself re-elected next year than getting somebody in Montana or Kansas or South Dakota or Missouri a job today. He is so determined to keep his liberal base happy, he is even willing to go against the labor unions that, by the way, are enthusiastically in favor of beginning this project right now.

What have they had to say about it? Well, the Teamsters put it this way:

The Keystone Pipeline project will offer working men and women a real chance to earn a good wage and support their families in this difficult economic climate.

That is Jimmy Hoffa.

The AFL-CIO:

For America's skilled craft construction professionals, any discussion of the Keystone XL project begins and ends with one word: JOBS.

The AFL-CIO further said:

As many as 500,000 indirect jobs via a strong economic multiplier effect . . . without one single dollar of government assistance.

Isn't this what we are looking for? It doesn't cost the government anything. It creates jobs immediately. This is what we are looking for.

The Brotherhood of Electrical Workers:

At a time when jobs are the top global priority, the Keystone project will put thousands back to work and have ripple benefits throughout the North American economy.

Laborers' International Union of North America had this to say: This is "not just a pipeline, but is a lifeline"—not just a pipeline, but a lifeline—"for thousands of desperate working men and women."

So what do we have here? We have a privately funded project that labor leaders are saying their members want up and running. But the President says this one can wait. Despite what he has said about importing oil from allies, despite what the labor unions say, the President wants to delay these jobs until after his election.

It is not just the unions and the Republicans who are asking for this project to move forward. Let's take a look at what some of the Democrats in Congress have said about it. There was a letter from 22 House Democrats to President Obama on October 19 of this year, and I will just read a few excerpts: "America truly cannot afford to say no."

Further in the letter:

Mr. President, America needs the Keystone XL Pipeline.

Further in the letter:

The Department of State's Final Environmental Impact Statement reaffirmed the findings of the two previous environmental impact statements, namely, that the Keystone XL Pipeline will have no significant impact on the environment.

Further in this letter from the 22 Democrats to the President they said:

This represents a true shovel-ready project that would directly create 20,000 high quality domestic manufacturing and construction jobs for Americans who are desperately seeking employment.

That is 22,000 directly working for the pipeline. I have already described the spin-off benefits—the other jobs that would be created as a result of it.

Senator BAUCUS—right here in the Senate—Senator BAUCUS said:

We need to put Montanans back to work and cannot afford further delays to the Keystone XL pipeline.

Senator TESTER said:

It should not have to wait 14 months for an up-or-down decision.

The Montana Senators have it right. Americans can't wait for the next election. They want their jobs now—right now.

So it is my hope that Prime Minister Harper is able to convince the President to change his mind.

Congressional Republicans and Democrats stand ready to move forward on this project. We are prepared to do all within our means to get the Keystone XL Pipeline approved. There is literally no time for delay.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. I ask that we now move to morning business.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the first hour equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first 30 minutes and the majority controlling the next 30 minutes.

MIDDLE CLASS TAX CUT ACT OF 2011—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Madam President, I now move to proceed to Calendar No. 251, S. 1944.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to the bill (S. 1944) to create jobs by providing payroll tax relief for middle class families and businesses, and for other purposes.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. I have a cloture motion at the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby

move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 251, S. 1944, a bill to create jobs by providing payroll tax relief for middle class families and businesses, and for other purposes:

Harry Reid, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Richard J. Durbin, Charles E. Schumer, Carl Levin, Debbie Stabenow, Kent Conrad, Joseph I. Lieberman, Dianne Feinstein, Jeff Bingaman, Tim Johnson, Daniel K. Inouye, John F. Kerry, Max Baucus, Daniel K. Akaka, Richard Blumenthal, Kirsten E. Gillibrand.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that we resume morning business under the previous order; further, that morning business be extended until 6 p.m. this evening with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to enter into a colloquy with my Republican colleagues during our morning business time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NORTH AMERICAN ENERGY SECURITY ACT

Mr. HOEVEN. Madam President, I rise this morning to discuss the North American Energy Security Act in a colloquy with my colleagues. Joining me will be our leader, Senator MITCH MCCONNELL of Kentucky, Senator KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON of Texas, Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON from the great State of Georgia, Senator MIKE JOHANNIS from Nebraska, and Senator JIM INHOFE of Oklahoma. We are here to discuss a very solutions-oriented piece of legislation. It is about creating jobs. It is about creating energy security for our Nation. It is about good environmental stewardship. It is about all of these things and more.

We want to take this opportunity to discuss the legislation and encourage—to urge—our fellow colleagues to join with us to create jobs and opportunity for the American people. In a nutshell, this legislation clears the way for the Keystone XL Pipeline, which is a 1,700-mile pipeline that will run from Alberta, Canada, all the way down to the gulf coast region of the country, down to the refineries in the United States.

This blue line shows the route of the Keystone XL Pipeline. This red line shows an existing pipeline, the Keystone Pipeline, which was built very recently by TransCanada. It provides almost 600,000 barrels a day of crude to

the United States. The Keystone XL Pipeline would provide more than 700,000 barrels a day of crude oil to our refineries. In addition, it will also haul domestic crude from States such as North Dakota and Montana.

It will put 100,000 barrels a day of our own light, sweet, domestic crude into the pipeline to bring it down for our needs in the country. It will also bring oil from places such as Cushing, OK, where we currently have backlogs to the refineries, as well. So it is also about moving oil within our country as well as bringing Canadian crude to the United States and to our refineries.

I mentioned it is a job creation bill. As our leader said just a minute ago, just the construction alone will put 20,000 workers on the job—20,000 workers on the job—just constructing the pipeline. The Perryman Group out of Waco, TX, has indicated more than 250,000 jobs. It is a huge job creator.

I yield to our leader, Senator MCCONNELL.

Mr. MCCONNELL. If the Senator will yield on that point, it is my understanding, and is it not correct, that these are not jobs sometime in the future but these are, in fact, jobs that just as soon as the President would sign off on this, this project is ready to go. We don't have to borrow any—the government doesn't have to borrow any money and they don't have to try to stimulate anything. This is a project, as I understand it, I would ask my friend from North Dakota, that is literally shovel ready and will not cost the government a penny?

Mr. HOEVEN. This is a project that is absolutely ready to go and will not cost the Federal Government one penny. It puts 20,000 workers on the job right away.

The hurdle was the route through Nebraska, but we have now worked with the State of Nebraska. They have had a special session. They have set up a process to clear that part of the route. Our legislation says within 60 days after passage of this bill the route is deemed approved. That is after 3 years of process through the EPA.

So we are ready to go. We have addressed the issues. We can put these people on the job now if we can get the Presidential approval.

Mr. MCCONNELL. In fact, I would say to my friend, the Senator from Nebraska is on the Senate floor with us right now. He could further underscore that the people of Nebraska, having now satisfied the concern they had earlier about location, seem to be ready to go.

Mr. JOHANNIS. Madam President, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the leader's comment and his question. The leader is absolutely right. The people of Nebraska, through their elected officials, have worked with the company building this pipeline in that they have resolved their differences.

The reason I support this legislation and have decided to be a cosponsor of the legislation is that this legislation

respects the Nebraska process. It says there will be a process in Nebraska where we will site the pipeline in the best place. This legislation says that is fine. But what this legislation also acknowledges is, on the entire rest of the pipeline outside of the State of Nebraska, this is ready to be built today.

The President of the United States has had 3 years of background study and extensive environmental study, as the leader has pointed out, and nothing is going to change outside of the State of Nebraska. So work can begin today. There is just one person holding up that work. That is the President of the United States. With the stroke of a pen, he can turn this project loose. It will respect what is going on in Nebraska. Workers can be hired, the pipeline can be built, and those jobs can be literally provided today.

So I support this legislation. I am proud to be here this morning to say that and to thank the Senator from North Dakota, the minority leader, and all others who have worked with us to solve this problem. The problem is solved. We are ready to create the jobs. It is my hope the President will announce that he is ready to proceed to create these jobs for American workers.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Could I ask one further question of either or both of the Senators—and Senator ISAKSON as well.

I understand there is a suggestion that there may be political concerns on the President's part, and we all know that most environmental groups are very much on the Democratic side. But is it not the case that there are a number of unions in the country—most of which, certainly, do not support Republicans anywhere I know—that also feel passionately about this issue and would like to get to work? Is that not the case?

Mr. HOEVEN. I ask Senator JOHANNIS, would he like to respond?

Mr. JOHANNIS. I have worked on this issue for a number of months—actually, a couple of years. Here is the situation: Unions are ready to go to work. I talk to the locals in Nebraska on a regular basis, and they talk about unemployment numbers that are staggering, in the double-digits, which, in our State, is remarkable because we have an unemployment rate of 4.2 percent.

The unions are ready to go to work, bringing their skills and their talents to bear. The leader's observation is absolutely right.

For the environmentalists, on the other hand, it is not the pipeline, it is not the location, it is that they do not want the tar sands development to occur. So the President is on the horns of a dilemma. Part of his base, the unions, are saying: Create the jobs. There is already a pipeline. Let's go out there and do this in the most environmentally sensitive way we possibly can.