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Fall 2011

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Martin, Danny, "NO Means NO, Mr. President" (2011). *Op-Eds from ENSC230 Energy and the Environment: Economics and Policies, Fall 2011*. 10.

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ENSC 230/AECN 399 Energy and the Environment:
Economics and Policy
OP-ED
12/09/2011

NO Means NO, Mr. President

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For many Americans, TransCanada's Keystone XL Pipeline has become an extremely heated issue over the past few months. Prior to November the primary controversy was over the proposed route of the pipeline as it was to be laid over the eastern edge of the Ogallala Aquifer, one of America's vital natural resources. Whether it was the visible opposition to the pipeline route, the science behind the opposition, or maybe just a plain and simple strategic campaign move made by President Obama, on November 10th the President postponed the State Department's vote on whether or not TransCanada should be granted a permit for the proposed route until after the 2012 presidential election. I celebrated this when I first heard the news as did many others, but as a natural resources student at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, I understand that any pipeline carrying tar sands oil is an unacceptable pipeline. I quickly realized that I celebrated too soon and that the only decision that I should give Obama praise for would be one of dismissal towards TransCanada's pipeline. Four days after Obama's announcement to postpone the pipeline, TransCanada officials announced that the company would shift its original pipeline route away from the Sandhills area of Nebraska and the Ogallala Aquifer, a shift that TransCanada originally claimed was impossible.

The State Department will still decide the final outcome of the project, but it appears that TransCanada is going to do everything within its power to see its \$7 billion project through

to the end. Jobs are what TransCanada promises with the construction of the pipeline on our soil, but as an indirect result of the moving of the pipeline, TransCanada is also taking tax dollars from us. Nebraska Speaker of the Legislature, Mike Flood proposed that Nebraska tax dollars fund a state Environmental Impact Statement which should customarily be paid for by TransCanada. Why should Nebraska pay for something that TransCanada is obviously responsible for? How can anyone say yes to this project when Nebraskan's are paying so much for this company's greed and will continue to pay for it if the pipeline is allowed?

When we look at all the facts it becomes overwhelmingly apparent that President Obama needs to show TransCanada that NO means NO. The Keystone XL pipeline is not the first to be put in Nebraska soil by this company, and unfortunately the company's track record shows us that we made the mistake of letting them put one pipeline in our soil at all. Although TransCanada boasts its Keystone pipelines as being the safest on the continent, 12 leaks occurred during the first year of the Keystone 1 pipeline, more than any other first year pipeline in U.S. history. The most devastating of the leaks occurred in North Dakota on May 7, 2011 where 21,000 gallons of crude oil sprayed a geyser 60 feet into the air. We already have one of TransCanada's pipelines in Nebraska soil that has this potential – do we really want two?

What's more that TransCanada wants to carelessly make money by risking the land we call home is that the company has threatened to gain the rights to land of private landowners by means of eminent domain. Eminent domain generally allows confiscation of private property if it serves for the "greater good," but is the greater good really to be served in this situation? The Canadian company had not even sought federal approval to invoke eminent domain before

threatening landowners. Once again, is it really for the “greater good” of our nation to have a foreign company bully innocent American landowners?

Besides all of the bullying and the potential catastrophes, the fact that tar sands oil is a dirty step back from American innovation is reason enough to say no to the pipeline. Mining for tar sands oil generates between 5 to 10 times more carbon dioxide emissions than conventional oil and the process creates toxic lakes large enough to be viewed from space. Extracting tar sands oil from Canada’s Boreal forest is one of the largest and most destructive projects on Earth.

TransCanada’s pipeline does not bring us energy security; it only secures our dependence on oil. I advise each and every one of you to do the research and discover the facts. The more you discover, the more apparent it will become that our president needs to emphasize that NO really does mean NO when it comes to the Keystone XL pipeline.