

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

September 13, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write regarding several aspects of the proposed Keystone XL pipeline that warrant closer scrutiny before any final national interest determination on the project is made.

The first issue is greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. According to the State Department's Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), the Keystone XL pipeline project will increase annual GHG emissions by a range of 3 to 21 MMTCO_{2e}, which equates to an additional 588,000 to 4,061,000 passenger vehicles on the road. As we work together to combat climate change and build America's clean energy future, we should carefully evaluate any initiative that would make those goals harder to achieve.

The second concern involves pipeline safety. In testimony before the House Energy and Power Subcommittee, the Administrator of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) testified that PHMSA had not evaluated the risks associated with transporting diluted bitumen, which is more corrosive than conventional oil. This knowledge gap is made all the more consequential by the spill history of the first Keystone pipeline and the fact that the pipeline's preferred route runs through the Ogallala aquifer, which supplies 30% of the nation's ground water for irrigation and fresh drinking water to millions of Americans.

Finally, on August 16, I joined 35 other Members of Congress in writing to Secretary Clinton requesting that the State Department analyze the potential health impacts of increased air pollution in communities surrounding refineries that receive raw crude oil through the proposed Keystone XL pipeline before construction or operation of the proposed project. The brief August 29th reply we received from the State Department acknowledged the need to protect human health in at-risk communities and indicated that the issue would need to be more directly addressed at forthcoming public meetings in Port Arthur, TX and other cities along the proposed pipeline route before a final permit is issued.

Now that the State Department has issued its FEIS, at least eight executive branch agencies – including the Environmental Protection Agency – will have an opportunity for review and comment prior to a final national interest determination. I look forward to the EPA's analysis and appreciate your consideration of these views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Van Hollen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Chris" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Van Hollen".

CHRIS VAN HOLLEN
Member of Congress