

December 29, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As you well know, the payroll tax cut extension that you signed into law on December 23, 2011, includes a provision requiring an Administration decision within 60 days of enactment on whether to approve construction of the Keystone XL pipeline. I write on behalf of AJC, the global Jewish advocacy organization, to respectfully urge that you approve the pending Presidential Permit application for construction and operation of the pipeline.

As AJC wrote earlier to Secretary Clinton, we have long recognized the link between energy security and national security—and believe that the United States must pursue a comprehensive, multifaceted energy policy targeted at substantially reducing dependence on oil from hostile or unstable foreign sources. The Keystone project will be a critical part of that broad-ranging approach—an approach that must include substantial increases in vehicle fuel efficiency and development and commercialization of alternative sources of energy and alternative vehicle technologies, along with identification and prudent exploitation of available sources of oil, both domestically and from friendly sources.

As if to emphasize the need for urgent action, just this week, in direct response to pending U.S. economic sanctions, Iran threatened to blockade the Strait of Hormuz—a move that, if carried out, would have profound economic and strategic consequences. These events follow, of course, the alarming International Atomic Energy Agency report of November 8, 2011, which detailed Iran’s progress in achieving nuclear weapons capability.

We certainly understand the need to assure that construction and operation of the 1,700-mile pipeline would be consistent with environmental protection. However, we note that concerns regarding the safety of the project were substantially addressed in the first instance by the Transportation Department’s issuance of 57 safety requirements for the pipeline, and the State Department’s assessment that if those conditions are met, the Keystone XL project will have “a degree of safety over any other typically constructed domestic oil pipeline system under current code.”

Failure to move forward with the Keystone XL project as envisioned could, we fear, prompt Canada to choose alternative markets, denying the United States access to oil from a stable and friendly source, even as we transition to a clean, renewable energy economy. It would also deprive us of the thousands of critically needed new jobs that Keystone development would create.

In light of the foregoing, AJC urges your prompt approval of Keystone XL pipeline construction, and thanks you for considering our views on this urgent matter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Harris". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "D".

David Harris