

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Geoff Garin And Allan Rivlin
DATE: February 3, 2012
RE: Recent Swing State Polling On The Keystone XL Pipeline

We recently completed a survey with representative cross sections of voters in four key battleground states, including 200 interviews in each of three Midwestern states (Ohio, Michigan, and Iowa) and 400 interviews in Colorado. These 1,000 interviews were conducted by telephone from January 26 to 29, 2012.

1. Seven in nine voters now say they have heard or read about the controversy involving the Keystone XL pipeline, and despite a sustained ad campaign by the oil industry in several of these states, President Obama continues to hold the high ground over the Republicans in Congress on both jobs and energy. By 45% to 38%, voters in these battleground states trust Obama over congressional Republicans on addressing America's energy needs. Similarly, President Obama holds an advantage of 44% to 39% on promoting jobs.

2. Before hearing any arguments, a small plurality say that President Obama's decision on the pipeline was the wrong one, but one in four voters has not come to a conclusion on this either way. Overall, 32% say Obama made the right decision in this matter, 43% said he made the wrong decision, and 25% have no opinion or are undecided. The main reasons for this plurality is that Republican voters are much more likely than either Democrats or independents to take sides on the issue. Independents who take a position are nearly evenly divided (34% right decision, 39% wrong decision).

3. After hearing pro and con arguments about the pipeline, voters' considered opinion is that President Obama made the right decision in denying the permit for the Keystone XL pipeline. On the basis of hearing what supporters and opponents of the pipeline say, 47% conclude that Obama's decision was the right one, and 36% say it was the wrong one; 17% still have no opinion. On an informed basis, Democrats support the President's decision by 79% to 9%, while independents support it by 48% to 33%. Republicans continued to be largely opposed to the president on this matter by 69% to 13%. There is a large gender gap in these results, with women overwhelmingly opposed to the pipeline and supportive of Obama's decision.

4. The most effective arguments in moving voters to support the President and oppose the pipeline involve the risk of a toxic oil spill over an aquifer that provides fresh water and water for farming to one-third of the

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United States—a concern that is compounded by questions about TransCanada's safety record and the number of spills that have occurred in the first year of the Keystone One pipeline. Under these circumstances, there is broad concurrence that the President should not give the project a go ahead until he is satisfied that the project will not be dangerous or lead to an environmental and economic disaster.

5. There also is a sharp decline in the salience of the proponents' case regarding its impact on America's energy security, as voters learn the likelihood of the refined oil being shipped off for export. Indeed, more than three-quarters of voters oppose building the pipeline if there is not a requirement for all of the oil to stay in the United States.

6. There is significant mistrust of both the oil industry and the Republicans in Congress. When voters are informed that the jobs claims by the supporters of the pipeline are grossly exaggerated, it reduces the salience of the jobs claims, and adds to the conclusion that the risks of the tar sands oil pipeline outweigh the benefits.

CORE MESSAGE:

TransCanada's proposal to build a tar sands oil pipeline to Texas so it can export oil overseas carries a lot of risk for America with very little benefit. A pipeline to export Canadian oil to other countries would not help our energy independence, and it raises the danger of a toxic oil spill that could mean an economic and environmental disaster for vast areas of our country.

TransCanada has a poor safety record, with 14 oil spills in the first year alone of its Keystone One pipeline. Now it wants to build a more dangerous pipeline over the aquifer that supplies fresh water to one-third of the United States. Tar sands oil is an especially toxic form of oil that if spilled could contaminate land or water for a long time. A spill of toxic tar sands oil, even one that was only a fraction of the size of the 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, could contaminate this fresh water supply for generations. President Obama was right to stand up to the political pressure from the oil industry and the Republicans in Congress by refusing to make a rushed decision.