

Back in October President Obama chided Congress – specifically the Republican-majority House – for failing to embrace his latest stimulus plan. He scolded lawmakers for not rubber-stamping his proposal to raise taxes by a half trillion dollars to fund yet another unconvincing government jobs program which offered little more than a rerun of his costly, failed 2009 stimulus.

Visibly frustrated, the president took to the road preaching the message "we can't wait on Congress." Months later, he is still promising to go around the legislative branch, if necessary, in order to achieve his goals.

I've got some good news for the president. If he's truly interested in creating jobs, he doesn't have to wait. Congress has already signaled its interest in a landmark energy project that not only will ease America's dependence on oil from unfriendly nations, but will also create tens of thousands of new jobs.

When the House and Senate passed the two-month extension of the payroll tax cut last month, we included language requiring the president to reach a decision within 60 days on whether to grant a permit to construct the Keystone XL pipeline. The president has previously indicated he would not take any action on the pipeline permit until next year.

The Keystone project entails the building of an oil pipeline stretching from Canada down to the Gulf, allowing the flow of Canadian oil to American refineries. The project – which would not involve taxpayer dollars – has been the subject of federal scrutiny for the past three years and found to have no significant impact on the environment.

In a world of political instability, it makes good sense for the United States to increase energy ties with its closest and most dependable ally, Canada. For its part, the Canadian government would like to do the same as its oil exports are expected to rise. But it cannot be expected to wait indefinitely for the U.S. to reach a decision.

The Wall Street Journal reported on January 9, 2012, that the Obama administration foot dragging on the approval of the Keystone pipeline has already prompted Canada to consider

transporting its oil supplies to its west coast to accommodate other customers. It is not hard to imagine that oil-hungry China would be one of those looking to take advantage of U.S. indecision.

What's most bewildering about the White House's reluctance to make a decision is the fact that the Keystone XL Pipeline isn't even a partisan issue. The president doesn't have to listen to conservatives in Congress to find a reason to support the pipeline project. Here is what 22 House Democrats wrote the president on October 21, 2011:

"We write today to express our support that a Presidential Permit for the Keystone XL Pipeline Project is in America's national interest. This is based on the fact that the Keystone XL Pipeline will inject \$20 billion of private sector investment into the American economy, create 20,000 direct jobs, spur the creation of 118,000 spin-off jobs, pay out \$5 billion in taxes to local counties over the project's lifetime, bolster America's energy security and strengthen our national security."

They go on to point out that the project has the support of labor unions, landowners, veterans' groups, Hispanic groups, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and energy policy and national security experts.

Mr. Obama recently said his New Year's resolution is "doing whatever it takes to move this economy forward."

So, Mr. President, will you keep your resolution? Will you finally approve the permit to strengthen American energy security and create real jobs? Like you said back in October, we can't wait.

Austal Rolls Out Second LCS:

If you were passing by the Mobile waterfront last week you would have been treated to an impressive sight. Austal USA rolled out its second littoral combat ship, the Coronado (LCS4), for all to see. The company said the vessel is almost 90 percent complete and "will be rapidly

approaching sea trials this year speeding it along its way to completion and final delivery to the Navy."

The Coronado, which was scheduled to be christened on January 14, 2012, was visible along side another of Austal's new line of Navy ships, the Joint High Speed Vessel Spearhead (JHSV1). The Spearhead was similarly launched last September.

Austal currently holds contracts to manufacture up to ten LCS's and up to seven JHSV's for the Navy. The company presently employs over 2,100 workers and continues to hire as it steadily grows towards 4,000 employees.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.

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