

'Nay!': US Senate Fails in Attempt to Force Approval of Keystone XL Pipeline

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In a vote on Tuesday, the measure to advance approval of the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline failed to gather sixty votes in the US Senate. (Image: C-SPAN screengrab with overlay)

Update (6:21 PM EST):

Falling short by a single vote, a vote in the U.S. Senate on Tuesday evening failed to get the requisite 60 votes needed to approve a bill designed to force approval of the controversial Keystone XL tar sands pipeline.

The final vote was 59 in favor and 41 voting against the bill (see official roll call below). The 'Yays' included all the 45 Republicans in the Senate who were joined by 14 Democrats. The remaining Democrats voted 'Nay' against the bill, accompanied by the Senate's two Independents, Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Sen. Angus King of Maine.

Climate campaigners celebrate the vote result, even as they acknowledged the deplorable fact that such a vote took place at all.

“Once again, Congress tried to play games with our future—and failed,” said May Boeve, executive director of 350.org, in a [statement](#). “Since Keystone XL has always been President Obama’s decision, this vote was never anything more than an empty gesture of political theater.”

Boeve suggested President Obama take the opportunity provided by the result in the Senate to reject the project once and for all. “By dramatically accelerating tar sands oil development, Keystone XL clearly fails President Obama’s own climate test,” she said. “The pipeline is a lose-lose for everyone except TransCanada. The President has all the information he needs to reject this pipeline now, and we’re going to stand by him to make sure he does.”

The Sierra Club’s executive director Michael Brune applauded those senators who “stood up for the health of our families and our climate” by voting against the measure. “There’s no good reason the Senate should have wasted all this time on yet another meaningless push for Keystone XL,” said Brune. “Since day one, the decision on the pipeline has belonged to President Obama, and he has repeatedly said he will reject this pipeline if it contributes to the climate crisis. As there is no doubt that it does, we remain confident that is precisely what he’ll do.”

Following the vote, 350.org’s Jamie Henn tweeted:

“Once again, Congress tried to play games with our future—and failed” [#NoKXL](#) <https://t.co/tqhxmCBbH6>
<pic.twitter.com/Zexm438kBy>

– 350 dot org (@350) [November 18, 2014](#)

Reactions to the vote were also trending on Twitter: [#NoKXL Tweets](#)

The complete roll call for the Senate vote follows (with Democratic 'Yay' votes underlined>):

Alphabetical by Senator Name

Alexander (R-TN), Yea	Gillibrand (D-NY), Nay	Murphy (D-CT), Nay
Ayotte (R-NH), Yea	Graham (R-SC), Yea	Murray (D-WA), Nay
Baldwin (D-WI), Nay	Grassley (R-IA), Yea	Nelson (D-FL), Nay
Barrasso (R-WY), Yea	Hagan (D-NC), Yea	Paul (R-KY), Yea
Begich (D-AK), Yea	Harkin (D-IA), Nay	Portman (R-OH), Yea
Bennet (D-CO), Yea	Hatch (R-UT), Yea	Pryor (D-AR), Yea
Blumenthal (D-CT), Nay	Heinrich (D-NM), Nay	Reed (D-RI), Nay
Blunt (R-MO), Yea	Heitkamp (D-ND), Yea	Reid (D-NV), Nay
Booker (D-NJ), Nay	Heller (R-NV), Yea	Risch (R-ID), Yea
Boozman (R-AR), Yea	Hirono (D-HI), Nay	Roberts (R-KS), Yea
Boxer (D-CA), Nay	Hoeven (R-ND), Yea	Rockefeller (D-WV), Nay
Brown (D-OH), Nay	Inhofe (R-OK), Yea	Rubio (R-FL), Yea
Burr (R-NC), Yea	Isakson (R-GA), Yea	Sanders (I-VT), Nay
Cantwell (D-WA), Nay	Johanns (R-NE), Yea	Schatz (D-HI), Nay
Cardin (D-MD), Nay	Johnson (D-SD), Nay	Schumer (D-NY), Nay
Carper (D-DE), Yea	Johnson (R-WI), Yea	Scott (R-SC), Yea
Casey (D-PA), Yea	Kaine (D-VA), Nay	Sessions (R-AL), Yea
Chambliss (R-GA), Yea	King (I-ME), Nay	Shaheen (D-NH), Nay
Coats (R-IN), Yea	Kirk (R-IL), Yea	Shelby (R-AL), Yea
Coburn (R-OK), Yea	Klobuchar (D-MN), Nay	Stabenow (D-MI), Nay
Cochran (R-MS), Yea	Landrieu (D-LA), Yea	Tester (D-MT), Yea
Collins (R-ME), Yea	Leahy (D-VT), Nay	Thune (R-SD), Yea
Coons (D-DE), Nay	Lee (R-UT), Yea	Toomey (R-PA), Yea
Corker (R-TN), Yea	Levin (D-MI), Nay	Udall (D-CO), Nay
Cornyn (R-TX), Yea	Manchin (D-WV), Yea	Udall (D-NM), Nay
Crapo (R-ID), Yea	Markey (D-MA), Nay	Vitter (R-LA), Yea
Cruz (R-TX), Yea	McCain (R-AZ), Yea	Walsh (D-MT), Yea
Donnelly (D-IN), Yea	McCaskill (D-MO), Yea	Warner (D-VA), Yea
Durbin (D-IL), Nay	McConnell (R-KY), Yea	Warren (D-MA), Nay
Enzi (R-WY), Yea	Menendez (D-NJ), Nay	Whitehouse (D-RI), Nay
Feinstein (D-CA), Nay	Merkley (D-OR), Nay	Wicker (R-MS), Yea
Fischer (R-NE), Yea	Mikulski (D-MD), Nay	Wyden (D-OR), Nay
Flake (R-AZ), Yea	Moran (R-KS), Yea	
Franken (D-MN), Nay	Murkowski (R-AK), Yea	

Earlier:



Student activists confront a staffer in “turncoat” Senator Michael Bennett’s (D-Colo.) office ahead of the Keystone vote. (Photo via Bold Nebraska)

Ahead of a vote scheduled for late afternoon in the U.S. Senate on Tuesday, activists opposed to a measure seeking to force approval of the Keystone XL were pulling out all the stops in order to make sure key lawmakers heard their message.

A live stream of the Senate proceedings was [available](#) on C-SPAN throughout the day.

As senators one by one took the floor on Tuesday to debate passage of the Keystone XL pipeline, youth and environmental activists stormed Capitol Hill to send a last-minute message to “turncoat” Democrats: ‘Listen to the people, not corporate dollars.’

According to reports, students were arrested for blockading the office of U.S. Senator Tom Carper (Del.), where they sang and [brandished](#) a banner that read: “Sen. Carper, if you’re not a climate denier, don’t vote like one.”

Youth activists along with members of the Cowboy-Indian

Alliance held a sit-in at the office of Senator Michael Bennett (Colo.) where they blocked the door and [read aloud](#) names of communities along the tar sands pipeline route with the number of people whom would be adversely affected by its construction.

Aldo Seoane, an Indigenous activist with the Alliance, said during a press conference outside Bennett's office that the lawmaker must "listen to the people, not just corporate money."

The student-led actions are part of a wave of eleventh-hour demonstrations being held to prevent Democratic lawmakers from joining ranks with their GOP counterparts who are voting in favor of Big Oil interests.

On Tuesday, demonstrators in New York City, including *Gasland* director Josh Fox and progressive gubernatorial candidate Zephyr Teachout, [held](#) a rally and press conference in Foley Square.

"Today's goal: keep Big Oil from counting to 60," wrote 350.org organizer Duncan Meisel on his Twitter feed Tuesday morning, referring to the number of votes necessary to pass the bill. In addition to 350.org, other national environmental groups including the Sierra Club have been [advocating](#) for constituents to call their lawmakers ahead of the vote.

On Monday, Senator Mary Landrieu [boasted](#) to feeling "very comfortable" that she had the 60 votes needed to advance the pipeline bill. Hoping to [maintain](#) her Senate seat in an upcoming runoff race in Louisiana, the Democratic senator is aiming sway a handful of other Democrats to vote alongside the 45 Republican 'yes' votes in favor of the pipeline.

Also Monday, demonstrators, including local students, a farmer from Nebraska, and representatives of Native American communities, [erected](#) a pipeline on Landrieu's front lawn.

The vote, which is expected Tuesday evening, reportedly may come down to a single 'yes' or 'no.' Independent Maine Senator Angus King, rumored to have been Landrieu's 60th vote, waited until Tuesday afternoon before releasing a [statement](#) committing to vote against the pipeline.

In a blog post on Tuesday, the Sunlight Foundation, a watchdog group focused on the role of money in politics, [tallied](#) some of the money that went into swaying the "handful of centrist Democrats" on whose shoulders the Senate vote rests.

Sunlight notes: "Bennet last year received two contributions of \$1,000 each from the lobbying firm that has been representing Saskatchewan, the Canadian province doing much of the lobbying for Keystone XL."

Further, they report:

The American Petroleum Institute (API), to take one example, is a prolific campaign donor (Landrieu has been their top recipient) and a savvy player of the grassroots influence game.

API has been pressuring on the fence legislators to approve the pipeline with a series of national TV ads, like this one urging viewers in Delaware to "Tell Senators Coons and Carper: approve Keystone XL." Sen. Tom Carper, the state's senior Democratic senator, already announced his support for Landrieu's measure greenlighting the pipeline.

Regardless of the vote outcome, President Obama is [expected](#) to veto any legislation to approve the pipeline, which 350.org said is a "testament to the power of courageous grassroots organizing," which they say has "turned Keystone XL from a done deal into Big Oil's biggest headache."

However, Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY), who will become Majority Leader in January when Republicans take control of the Senate,

assured his colleagues during comments from the Senate floor on Tuesday that should the vote fail the measure will be taken up in the next session.

In prepared remarks, Independent Senator Bernie Sanders [told](#) the Senate that scientific consensus is that we have a “narrow window of opportunity” to transform our energy system in light of the coming climate crisis. “This legislation would move us in exactly the wrong direction toward not only more dependence on fossil fuels but on some of the dirtiest fossil fuel imaginable,” Sanders added. “That is insane.”

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