

Rebuking Obama, Trump boosts Keystone, Dakota pipelines

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump moved swiftly Tuesday to advance the controversial Keystone XL and Dakota Access oil pipelines, signing executive actions to aggressively overhaul America's energy policy and deal a sharp blow to Barack Obama's legacy on climate change.

Obama had personally halted the Keystone XL project, which was to bring oil from Canada to the U.S., and major protest demonstrations have frozen work on the Dakota pipeline.

Trump, in his continuing effort to undo the past eight years of a Democratic president, invited the Keystone builder, TransCanada, to resubmit its application to the State Department for a presidential permit to construct and operate the pipeline. The company said it would reapply.

Obama halted the proposed pipeline in late 2015, declaring it would undercut U.S. efforts to

clinch a global climate change deal that was a centerpiece of his environmental agenda.

Trump also ordered the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to quickly review and approve construction and easement requests for the Dakota Access pipeline, a project that has led to major protests by American Indian groups and their supporters.

"From now on we are going to start making pipelines in the United States," Trump said from the Oval Office, where he also vowed to require the actual pipe for Keystone to be manufactured in America.

Trump dogged by insecurity over popular vote, media coverage

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump holds the most powerful office in the world. But he's dogged by insecurity over his loss of the popular vote in the election and a persistent frustration that the legitimacy of his presidency is being challenged

by Democrats and the media, aides and associates say.

Trump's fixation has been a drag on the momentum of his opening days in office, with his exaggerations about inauguration crowds and false assertions about illegal balloting intruding on advisers' plans to launch his presidency with a flurry of actions on the economy. His spokesman Sean Spicer has twice stepped into the fray himself, including on Tuesday, when he doubled down on Trump's false claim that he lost the popular vote because 3 million to 5 million people living in the U.S. illegally cast ballots.

"He believes what he believes based on the information he was provided," said Spicer, who provided no evidence to back up the president's statements. All 50 states and the District of Columbia have finalized their election results with no reports of the kind of widespread fraud that Trump is alleging.

If the president's claim were true it would mark the most significant election fraud in U.S. history — and ironically, would raise the same questions about

Trump's legitimacy that he's trying to avoid. Yet Spicer repeatedly sidestepped questions about whether the Trump administration would investigate the allegations pushed by the president.

"Anything is possible," he said.

Trump narrows down Supreme Court nominee list to 3

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has narrowed his choice to fill the Supreme Court vacancy to three judges and said he expects to make his decision in the coming days.

A person familiar with the selection process said the three judges, all white men who sit on federal appeals courts, were on the list of 21 potential high court picks Trump announced during the presidential campaign.

The leading contenders — who all have met with Trump — are William Pryor, Neil Gorsuch and Thomas Hardiman, the person said, speaking anonymously because he was not authorized to speak publicly about internal

decisions.

Pryor, 54, is an Alabama-based judge on the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Gorsuch, 49, is on the Denver-based 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Hardiman, 51, is based in Pittsburgh for the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. All three were nominated by President George W. Bush for their current posts.

Trump has promised to seek someone in the mold of conservative icon Antonin Scalia, who died nearly a year ago after serving on the Supreme Court for more than 29 years. Senate Republicans prevented President Barack Obama from filling the seat, a political gamble that paid off when Trump was elected.

Trump met Tuesday with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, Sen. Chuck Grassley and Sen. Dianne Feinstein to discuss the court vacancy. Grassley said in a statement that the meeting was productive and "a step in the right direction."

Trump said he plans to announce his choice next week.



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