

Trump calls Keystone 'great day' for jobs

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump greenlighted the long-delayed Keystone XL pipeline on Friday, declaring it a "great day for American jobs" and siding with energy advocates over environmental groups in a heated debate over climate change.

The presidential permit comes nearly a decade after Calgary-based TransCanada applied to build the \$8 billion pipeline, which will snake from Canada through the United States. Trump's State Department said the project advances U.S. national interests, in a complete reversal of the conclusion President Barack Obama's administration reached less than a year-and-a-half ago.

"It's a great day for American jobs and a historic moment for North America and energy independence," Trump said, standing alongside TransCanada's CEO in the Oval Office. Keystone will reduce costs and reliance on foreign oil while creating thousands of jobs, he said, adding: "It's going to be an incredible pipeline."

The decision caps the long scientific and political fight over a project that became a proxy battle in the larger fight over global warming. And Friday's decision, while long foreshadowed by Trump's public support for Keystone, represents one of the biggest steps to date by his administration to prioritize economic



President Donald Trump, flanked by Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, left, and Energy Secretary Rick Perry, is seen in the Oval Office Friday announcing the approval of a permit to build the Keystone XL pipeline, clearing the way for the \$8 billion project.

development over environmental concerns.

TransCanada, Trump said, can now build Keystone "with efficiency and with speed." Though it still faces other major hurdles, including disputes over the route, the president said the federal government was formulating final details "as we speak."

The 1,700-mile pipeline, as envisioned, would carry oil from tar sands in Alberta, Canada, to refineries along the Texas Gulf Coast, passing through Montana, South

Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas and Oklahoma. It would move roughly 800,000 barrels of oil per day.

Environmentalists, Native American groups and landowners who've opposed Keystone expressed outrage, and Greenpeace said the U.S. was "moving backwards" on climate and energy policy.

"Keystone was stopped once before, and it will be stopped again," vowed Annie Leonard, the group's U.S. director.

Obama in 2015 rejected the pipeline after years

of study, saying it would undercut U.S. credibility in the international climate change negotiations that culminated later that year in a global deal in Paris. He echoed the argument of environmental groups that Keystone would encourage use of carbon-heavy tar sands oil, contributing heavily to global warming.

Relying mostly on the same information, the Trump administration reversed Obama's decision.

In a lengthy report, the State Department alluded

to the Paris deal as one reason. Because many other countries have pledged to address climate change, it said Keystone can proceed without undermining the overall effort to slow global warming. The Paris agreement compels the U.S. and other countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions in coming decades.

Keystone would strengthen U.S. energy security by increasing access to Canada's "dependable supply of crude oil," said the State Department, which had jurisdiction because the pipeline crosses the U.S.-Canada border.

But the level of those benefits has been the subject of exhaustive debate in recent years.

Obama argued the oil wouldn't stay in the U.S. because it would be exported after being processed in American refineries. TransCanada insisted Keystone "is not an export pipeline." Many energy experts insisted the truth was somewhere in between.

Environmental groups argued Canada's tar sands oil should stay in the ground. But Keystone's backers said that wouldn't happen even if the pipeline wasn't built. Without a pipeline, they said the oil would move by rail or truck, more dangerous methods which themselves contribute greenhouse gas emissions.

How many jobs Keystone will create is also widely

disputed. TransCanada promised as many as 13,000 construction jobs and Trump once predicted it "could be 42,000 jobs."

Other estimates predict just a few thousand jobs, lasting only for the few years the pipeline is built.

And after that, only a few dozen workers would be needed to maintain the pipeline.

TransCanada CEO Russ Girling said Friday that thousands of people are "ready and itching to get to work."

Trump boasted as recently as this week that Keystone would be built with American steel, which he has required for new or expanded pipelines. But his administration has already given Keystone a pass. TransCanada has already acquired the steel for the project, and the White House has said it's too difficult to impose Trump's requirement on a project already under construction.

Although portions of Keystone are already built, it still faces obstacles to completion. In Nebraska, for example, the route must still be approved and opponents have repeatedly thwarted TransCanada's attempts to access the necessary land. A commission is expected to review the matter later this year.

Trump, told of the hiccup, pledged his help.

"Nebraska? I'll call Nebraska," he said.

Trump campaign chair offers to talk to House panel on Russia

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's former campaign manager, a key figure in investigations into the Trump campaign's ties to Russia, has volunteered to be interviewed by lawmakers as part of an increasingly partisan House probe of the Kremlin's alleged meddling in the 2016 election.

The chairman of the House intelligence committee, Rep. Devin Nunes, on Friday announced the prospect of an interview with Paul Manafort, and Nunes canceled a previously scheduled public hearing in which former Obama administration officials had agreed to testify about the Russia investigation. Manafort also volunteered to be interviewed by the Senate intelligence committee, which is conducting its own investigation.

It was not clear whether Manafort had offered to testify under oath or in a public hearing.

Manafort volunteered to be interviewed the same week that FBI director James Comey confirmed

House chairman apologizes after Trump briefing

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House claimed vindication while the House intelligence committee chairman privately apologized in the wake of his decision to brief President Donald Trump on secret intelligence intercepts related to a probe of Russian interference in the election.



Devin Nunes

Rep. Devin Nunes, a California Republican and member of President Donald Trump's transition team, told reporters after his committee's closed-door meeting Thursday that the presidential briefing was "a judgment call on my part" and added, "Sometimes you make the right decision, sometimes you make the wrong decision."

Democrats expressed outrage that Nunes would meet with Trump before talking to committee members and cited

the incident as another reason to question the panel's independence.

Nunes told reporters he had seen new information showing that the communications of Trump transition officials were scooped up through monitoring of other targets and improperly spread through intelligence agencies during the final days of the Obama administration. He specifically stated that the new information he received did not support Trump's allegations that President Barack Obama had ordered a wiretap at Trump Tower.

Nonetheless, White House spokesman Sean Spicer claimed that Nunes was "vindictive" the president following his unproven assertion about a wiretap, and Republican groups moved quickly to raise money off Nunes' revelations.

the existence of an ongoing counterintelligence investigation into possible Trump associates' coordination with Russia and just days after an Associated Press report revealed Manafort worked with ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin a decade ago.

The confirmation of an ongoing FBI investigation

was a blow to the White House, which has described the Russia probe as a ruse. And the new details about Manafort's ties to a close Putin ally appear to contradict

what Trump has previously said about Manafort's connections.

In February, Manafort said he was never involved with "anything to do with

the Russian government or the Putin administration." Trump has used the denials to assert that "to the best of his knowledge" none of his associates has anything to do with Russia. But documents obtained by the AP reveal Manafort had sought work from a Putin ally and proposed a campaign that he said could "greatly benefit the Putin government."

Nunes, a former dairy farmer from California and member of the Trump transition team, on Wednesday told reporters that an undisclosed source had shown him intelligence reports revealing that the communications of Trump transition officials were scooped up through routine surveillance and improperly spread through intelligence agencies during the final days of the Obama administration. After he briefed reporters, Nunes met with the president.

Democrats said Nunes'

loyalties to Trump appeared to outweigh his commitment to an independent, bipartisan investigation when he rushed to the White House to deliver the president information that Trump said vindicated him for his claims that former President Barack Obama wiretapping him.

Comey, Nunes and other intelligence officials have refuted Trump's claim, and the president has offered no supporting evidence.

"To take evidence that may or may not be related to the investigation to the White House, was wholly inappropriate, and, of course, cast grave doubts into the ability to run a credible investigation and the integrity of that investigation," the committee's top Democrat, Adam Schiff of California, said Friday.

Previously, Nunes and Schiff had held joint news conferences. Now what are becoming daily briefings are being done separately.

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