

11-7-2015

Bruce Huber was a Guest on NPR's All Things Considered, "What the Keystone XL Pipeline Decision Actually Means"

Bruce R. Huber

Notre Dame Law School, bhuber@nd.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarship.law.nd.edu/ndls_news



Part of the [Environmental Law Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Huber, Bruce R., "Bruce Huber was a Guest on NPR's All Things Considered, "What the Keystone XL Pipeline Decision Actually Means"" (2015). *NDLS in the News*. Paper 322.

http://scholarship.law.nd.edu/ndls_news/322

This Interview is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Scholarship at NDLScholarship. It has been accepted for inclusion in NDLS in the News by an authorized administrator of NDLScholarship. For more information, please contact lawdr@nd.edu.



POLITICS

< What The Keystone XL Pipeline Decision Actually Means

Updated November 7, 2015 · 6:34 PM ET

MICHEL MARTIN, HOST:

We'll start by talking about a few minutes at the White House that were nearly a decade in the making. We're speaking of President Obama's announcement yesterday that he has decided to reject the Keystone XL oil pipeline project. The pipeline would have carried crude oil from Canada to U.S. Gulf Coast refineries. Reaction to the announcement was what you might expect. Opponents of the project applauded; backers called it an overreaction to environmentalists and a job killer. For his part, President Obama said the issue had taken, quote, "an overinflated role in our political discourse," unquote.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)

BARACK OBAMA: This pipeline would neither be a silver bullet for the economy - as was promised by some - nor the express lane to climate disaster proclaimed by others.

MARTIN: Well, what about that? We wanted more context so we called Bruce Huber. He is a professor of energy law at the University of Notre Dame.

Professor Huber, thanks so much for speaking with us.

BRUCE HUBER: Absolutely, happy to do it.

MARTIN: So how big of a deal is this decision really?

HUBER: Well, in my view, it's not really a very big decision at all. I don't think it would even make my top 10 list of the most significant events for the environment. It's not a decision that has much of an impact on our domestic energy infrastructure. And it's, frankly, not a decision that is going to have that much of an impact on the environment either.

MARTIN: How come?

HUBER: Well, it simply was one of a whole mass of pipeline projects that are out there that are either underway or in the inaugural stages. And furthermore, the construction of the pipeline itself was not a major determinant in whether this oil actually comes out of the ground in northern Alberta. If you didn't want to go the pipeline route, you could transport the oil by rail, as we've been doing in great quantities out of North Dakota in recent years.

MARTIN: Let me just play a short clip from Bill McKibben. He's an environmentalist, one of the most prominent voices opposing the pipeline. This is him talking to NPR yesterday.

(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED BROADCAST)

BILL MCKIBBEN: This is the first time that a world leader has stopped a major fossil fuel project because of its effect on the climate. It's the first time that the power of big oil's been broken like that even a little, and that's a pretty astonishing thing.

MARTIN: What about that, Professor Huber?

HUBER: Sure. Well, I have enormous respect for Bill McKibben and the kinds of efforts that he's undertaken. But it's clear that what he's referring to is the fact that this particular decision had assumed this larger symbolic importance. But I suspect that in cooler moments, he would agree that the actual material's substantive output or impact of this particular decision is really not all that large on the grand scale. In fact, there are many folks on the environmental side who would actually prefer that oil is transported via pipeline than via rail because oil by rail is notoriously unsafe. You've

probably heard in the news, mention of derailments of trains and large leaks and incidents that happen of that sort. And then there's also the fact that this decision to turn down this particular pipeline doesn't really, quote, "keep it in the ground," quote, as proponents like to say.

MARTIN: So going forward, could you just give us a sense of how we should assess the impact of this?

HUBER: Sure. Sure. Yes. And the president did usefully make mention of the fact that part of the way that he regarded the decision was as a way of establishing and maintaining U.S. leadership with respect to environmental issues. And that's something that may well play to his favor in Paris. It certainly is also possible that this decision builds a bit of momentum for the environmental movement more generally. There are plenty of really, really important decisions that need to be made with respect to energy and environment over the upcoming years. And perhaps this will help cast those decisions in a better light.

MARTIN: That's Bruce Huber. He's a professor of energy law at the University of Notre Dame. Professor, thanks so much for speaking with us.

HUBER: Absolutely, you're very welcome. Glad to do it.

Copyright © 2015 NPR. All rights reserved. Visit our website terms of use and permissions pages at www.npr.org for further information.

NPR transcripts are created on a rush deadline by a contractor for NPR, and accuracy and availability may vary. This text may not be in its final form and may be updated or revised in the future. Please be aware that the authoritative record of NPR's programming is the audio.