

Canada Oil Pipeline Fight Hits D.C.

Proponents Want WH To Speed Decision On Project

BY MATTHEW DALY
 Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A dispute over a plan to send oil from western Canada to the Texas Gulf Coast moved to Capitol Hill on Monday, where a House panel debated whether to speed a decision by the Obama administration.

Republicans on the House Energy and Commerce Committee are backing a bill that would set a Nov. 1 deadline for the State Department to decide on the \$7 billion project. A Canadian company wants to build a 1,900-mile pipeline to carry crude oil extracted from tar sands in Alberta, Canada, to refineries in Texas.

Rep. Fred Upton, R-Mich., who chairs the energy panel, said it makes sense to pursue reliable and affordable energy in North America. The proposed Keystone XL pipeline would create thousands of jobs and help cut \$4-a-gallon prices at the pump, Upton said.

"We need to act soon as China is very interested in pursuing the same resources," Upton said. "If we don't say yes

soon, China will lock it up."

But environmental groups say the pipeline would bring "dirty oil" that requires huge amounts of energy to extract and could cause an ecological disaster in the event of a spill.

The pipeline planned by Calgary-based TransCanada would travel through five U.S. states — Montana, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas and Oklahoma — before reaching refineries in Houston and Port Arthur, Texas.

The project would double the capacity of an existing pipeline from Canada, and supporters say it could significantly reduce U.S. dependence on Middle Eastern oil.

The State Department said last month that a new environmental study on the pipeline revealed no new issues since a similar report was issued last year. The State Department has authority over the pipeline because it crosses an international boundary. Officials have pledged to decide on the project by the end of the year.

Environmental groups said the State Department report glossed over crucial issues such as pipeline safety and the

risks posed by the proposed route over the massive Ogallala Aquifer, which supplies drinking water to people in eight U.S. states.

The environmental group Friends of the Earth filed suit against the State Department last week, seeking details of any communications between a TransCanada lobbyist and the Obama administration. The lobbyist, Paul Elliott, was a top aide in the 2008 presidential campaign of Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Friends of the Earth said it wants to learn whether Elliott's role in the project has resulted in a possible conflict of interest at the State Department.

Democrats on the energy panel, meanwhile, questioned whether energy giant Koch Industries could profit from the pipeline's approval. The Kansas-based company, owned by billionaire brothers David and Charles Koch, has said it has no financial interest in the pipeline.

But Reps. Henry Waxman of California and Bobby Rush of Illinois said news reports indicate that the company is developing projects to refine oil produced from the pipeline and would be a potential buyer for crude shipped through the pipeline.

Neb. Poised To Outlaw Telemedicine Abortions

BY GRANT SCHULTE
 Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — A proposal to block Nebraska doctors from providing early-stage abortion drugs through webcams, a practice established in rural Iowa medical clinics, won final legislative approval Monday and was sent to a supportive governor.

The bill by Lincoln Sen. Tony Fulton would require a doctor's physical presence when a patient is given drugs such as mifepristone and misoprostol. The measure cleared its third vote by lawmakers, 38-9, and Republican Gov. Dave Heineman is expected to sign it.

The legislation, LB521, came in response to an Iowa program by Planned Parenthood of the Heartland, which established 16 rural remote sites in 2008. The process requires women to undergo an in-person examination and ultrasound by a health care professional — usually a nurse — before talking to a doctor through a webcam.

After a consultation, the doctor presses a button that opens a drawer to give patients the drugs. The patient takes the first drug while the doctor watches, the second drug on her own, and returns later for a follow-up exam.

Hoskins Sen. Dave Bloomfield, who designated the bill as his priority for the session, has said the legislation was designed to protect women's health by keeping a doctor nearby. Opponents noted that the drugs are taken over more than one day, and warned that the measure could hurt future telemedicine procedures unrelated to abortion.

Other lawmakers said the bill could force women to travel long distances for an abortion, a potentially unconstitutional burden. Attorney General Jon Bruning has said he believes the measure is constitutional.

The group Nebraska Right to Life praised Monday's vote, saying that similar measures have passed in Kansas, Oklahoma and Arizona.

"Our Legislature saw that situation (in Iowa) and rightly concluded that Nebraska did not need to be the next testing ground for Planned Parenthood's desire to expand chemical abortions beyond urban areas of the state," said Julie Schmit-Albin, the group's executive director.

Fulton's proposal was intended as a pre-emptive move to keep Iowa's program from expanding into Nebraska.

Planned Parenthood of the Heartland currently runs four facilities in Nebraska, all in Omaha and Lincoln. The group has announced plans to add satellite facilities in Grand Island, Hastings, Norfolk, North Platte, Fremont and Kearney.

Tracy Durbin, director of quality and risk management for Planned Parenthood of the Heartland, has said the bill could limit the growth of general telemedicine in Nebraska.

Lincoln Sen. Danielle Conrad said the measure was constitutionally flawed and would not reduce the overall number of abortions. Conrad called the measure unnecessary and impractical and said it lacks a scientific basis.

She said the bill was part of "an ongoing political attack on women's rights, women's health and the health care providers that are serving them."

Deadly Horse Virus Confirmed In South Dakota

MITCHELL (AP) — South Dakota's Animal Industry Board says a deadly and highly contagious virus has been confirmed in a horse in Gregory County.

The horse and others on the premises have been quarantined to prevent the spread of Equine Herpes Virus-1.

The virus has infected more than 30 horses in nine states and Canada after being traced to an Ogden, Utah, horse event earlier this month. Some of the horses have died.

The disease poses no threat to people.

Redistricting Could Keep Obama From Neb.

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — One political expert says a proposed redistricting plan that would shift traditionally Democratic votes out of the Omaha-based 2nd Congressional District could keep President Barack Obama from campaigning in eastern Nebraska.

Mike Wagner is a political science professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He says if Obama decides not to campaign in Nebraska, it could affect not only the 2nd District race, but the 2012 U.S. Senate race, as well.

Obama made an unprecedented effort in 2008 to secure the electoral vote in the 2nd Congressional District in Nebraska — one of two states that can split its electoral vote.

Wagner says if Obama decides not to campaign in Nebraska, that could "keep some Nelson voters at home."

Republicans have made unseating Nelson in 2012 a priority.

Rapid City Death Investigated As A Homicide

RAPID CITY (AP) — Authorities are treating the death of a woman in Rapid City as a homicide.

City police and the Pennington County Sheriff's Office say the woman in her late 30s was found in a residence with multiple stab wounds and taken to a hospital, where she was pronounced dead Monday morning. An autopsy is planned Tuesday.

Authorities did not immediately identify the woman. They did not immediately provide further details about the incident but said there does not appear to be any immediate threat to public safety.

Armed Robbery Investigated In Brookings

BROOKINGS (AP) — Brookings police are investigating an armed robbery at a convenience store.

Authorities tell KJJQ radio that two men entered the Zip Trip Convenience Store shortly before 12:30 a.m. Monday and demanded money. One of them had a knife.

The men fled on foot with an undisclosed amount of money.

Ex-Police Chief's Murder Trial Winding Down

HURON (AP) — The fate of a former South Dakota police chief charged with murder could soon be in the hands of a jury.

KOKK radio reports that defense attorneys for former Highmore Police Chief Ken Huber are expected to call their final witnesses Monday and then rest their case. Judge James Anderson says he hopes to have the case to the jury by Tuesday, on the 13th day of the trial.

Huber is being tried for the second time in the 2007 shooting death of Pam Huber. He was convicted in 2008 but the state Supreme Court overturned the verdict last year, saying Huber had not been allowed to fully argue his case that the shooting was accidental.

Neb. Legislature Could Adjourn Thursday

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska Speaker of the Legislature Mike Flood says lawmakers are on pace to end this year's session as early as Thursday.

Flood, of Norfolk, announced Monday that state senators are "on a flight path" to an early "sine die" adjournment. But he told lawmakers to expect late-night debates this week to meet that timeframe.

Flood said the schedule was not yet final. He said he still needs to talk with the governor's office, to make sure lawmakers have a chance to file override motions for any possible vetoes.

Flood said the entire Legislature will decide Thursday whether to adjourn, but he's scheduling to accommodate it.

Lawmakers this session have redrawn Nebraska's legislative and congressional maps, set the state's two-year budget, and overhauled a panel that hears collective bargaining disputes.

S.D. Governor's Mansion To Be Open For Tours

PIERRE (AP) — The governor's mansion in Pierre will be open for limited public tours this summer.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard and wife Linda said Monday that tours will be conducted each Wednesday in June, July and August. They will be for groups of up to 30 people and last 30 minutes. Volunteers will lead tours that begin at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.

Linda Daugaard said the governor's mansion belongs to the people of South Dakota.

The new governor's residence has 14,000 square feet of space and was built in 2005 using private donations. It has living quarters for the governor's family and additional space to host official state events.

Minn. Tornado Death Ruled Accident

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A man using a chainsaw to help clear a tree from a blocked roadway collapsed and died, his family said Monday, a second confirmed death related to a tornado that tore through Minneapolis over the weekend, injuring dozens of people and destroying hundreds of homes.

Family and friends of Rob MacIntyre said the 53-year-old collapsed about 6 p.m. Sunday, not long after helping clear the tree that was toppled by the tornado. Dave Soderstrom, who had been helping MacIntyre, said paramedics didn't arrive immediately because they had to travel on foot through impassable streets.

"They worked on him for 45 minutes," Soderstrom said. "They tried everything multiple times. He just didn't revive. He didn't react to anything."

MacIntyre was president of the Iowa-based Raptor Resource Project, the organization behind an "Eagle Cam" in Decorah that has at-

tracted worldwide attention over the Internet. The group issued a statement mourning his death.

Residents seemed to be in shock Monday as they emerged from their homes and saw toppled trees, missing garages, roofs on the ground and dangling power lines, all left behind after Sunday's tornado, which killed two people — including MacIntyre — and left 29 injured.

DECISION 2012

Pawlenty Opens Prez Bid, Delivers Tough Talk In Iowa

BY THOMAS BEAUMONT
 Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Tim Pawlenty on Monday cast himself as the Republican candidate willing to tell the country hard truths as he seeks the presidency, bluntly announcing in corn-dependent Iowa that its prized federal subsidies for ethanol should be phased out.

"The truth about federal energy subsidies, including federal subsidies for ethanol, is that they have to be phased out," Pawlenty told about 200 Republican activists and supporters in Des Moines in his first public appearance since officially kicking off his White House bid Sunday. "We simply can't afford them anymore."

The former Minnesota governor is using his first week of campaigning as an announced candidate to try to cast himself as a straight-talking Midwesterner, unafraid to consider drastic changes to sensitive spending programs in order to solve the nation's fiscal problems. He faces several obstacles in pursuing the GOP nomination; he isn't well-known nationally, ranks low in popularity polling and has been tagged by comedians and the chattering class as boring.

Pawlenty's announcement came hours after Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels' decision against a bid jolted the GOP race and brought the field into clearer focus.

Pawlenty made fiscal overhaul the centerpiece of his announcement speech, and planned to not just challenge politically influential Iowans, but swing-voting seniors in Florida and wealthy bank executives on Wall Street.

"Conventional wisdom says you can't talk about ethanol in Iowa or Social Security in Florida or financial reform on Wall Street," Pawlenty said. "But someone has to say it. Someone has to finally stand up and level with the American people. Someone has to lead."

Pawlenty plans to outline a Social Security plan that raises the retirement age for seniors and requires means-testing for wealthier retirees.

The proposals are aimed at establishing Pawlenty as a candidate who levels with the American people, which he said President Barack Obama, whom he hopes to challenge next year, has not done.

"President Obama's policies have failed," Pawlenty said, delivering a speech and answering questions from the audience but not reporters. "But more than that, he won't even tell us the truth about what it's really going to take to get out of the mess that we're in."

Pawlenty acknowledged the political sensitivity of changing Social Security and eliminating ethanol subsidies.



GLEN STUBBE/MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE/MCT
 Former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty announces his 2012 presidential candidacy at a campaign event in Des Moines, Iowa, Monday.

"I'm not some out-of-touch politician from some other part of the country," he said. "But even in Minnesota, when we faced fiscal challenges, we reduced ethanol subsidies. That's where we are now in Washington, but on a much, much larger scale."

As governor, Pawlenty played both sides of the ethanol issue. He angered farmers by pushing to trim subsidy payments to ethanol producers early in his first term. But he won their favor later by spearheading a drive to boost the amount of the fuel additive blended into each gallon of gasoline sold in the state. It must be 20 percent by 2013.

While the challenge to ethanol was a risk, Pawlenty made clear what Iowa means to his candidacy.

The setting for Pawlenty's appearance — a sun-splashed rooftop terrace overlooking the Iowa Capitol — underscored how important the state's leadoff presidential caucuses are to his bid as he tries to take advantage of Daniels' absence to position himself as the principal challenger to Mitt Romney.

The former Massachusetts governor lost his first bid in 2008 and

again is seeking the nomination of a party that historically has nominated a candidate who had run previously.

Given an opportunity to go after Romney in a Monday morning appearance on network television, Pawlenty demurred, saying he'd prefer to talk about his own presidential traits than criticize others. He did acknowledge he probably wouldn't be able to compete with the former private equity investment firm executive in terms of fundraising.

However, while criticizing Obama's candidness about the depths of the nation's fiscal crisis, he also subtly called on his would-be GOP rivals to be honest about the problems.

"It's time for America's president — and anyone who wants to be president — to look you in the eye and tell you the truth," he said.

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