

Congressman James Lankford (R-OK) - April 16, 2012

A couple of weeks ago, President Obama stood among stacks of green oil pipe in Cushing, Oklahoma—the pipeline crossroads of America—for an 11-minute photo op where he claimed credit for a thriving domestic energy industry. Six hours later, the president spoke in Ohio and blasted oil and gas as “the energy of the past” and claimed we “can’t simply drill our way out of the problem.” It may be politically beneficial to praise oil and gas while in Oklahoma and then attack it in Ohio, but it doesn’t help our nation become energy independent.

The president repeatedly states that America “only has two percent of the world’s known oil reserves.” It is a carefully worded phrase to give the impression that we are incapable of meeting our own energy needs. Actually, the United States is the third-largest producer of oil in the world. During the fourth quarter of 2011, America produced 58 percent of all the oil we consumed and we imported an additional 21 percent of oil from Canada and Mexico; which means 79 percent of our oil consumption at the end of 2011 came from North America.

If we increase our drilling and international pipeline capacity by only 21 percent, we can finally be free of Middle Eastern and Venezuelan oil. When we can produce our own oil in North America, we are no longer at the mercy of price speculation based on a potential war in the Middle East.

The Keystone pipeline has been delayed 44 months; the previous international pipeline was permitted in 24 months. While this president claims credit for increased drilling, those permits were actually approved under President George W. Bush; new drilling permits are down 36 percent under this administration. In testimony before Congress in March, Energy Secretary Steven Chu could not name any action from this administration to increase oil and gas production.

This administration has used the “environmentally sensitive” Ogallala Aquifer, which covers 174,000 square miles under eight states, as the primary reason for stalling approval of the Keystone Pipeline. But one look at an existing pipeline map will dispel the notion that pipelines are “new” to this area. In fact, thousands of miles of pipelines already cross the Ogallala Aquifer. With the passage of the Pipeline Safety bill in 2011 and today’s monitoring technology, the new pipeline will be the safest ever constructed.

## **Nebraska latest straw man**

The state of Nebraska has been the president's latest straw man to stop the development of a national infrastructure for fossil fuels. The administration is working through every means to slow or stop the progress toward energy independence through fossil fuels for fear that once we can provide our own energy future, there will be even little demand for the new "green" fuels. The free market is upside down as every energy proposal from the administration punishes coal, gas and oil so wind, solar and biofuels can survive.

I hear the distant echo of President Jimmy Carter shutting down natural gas electricity development as he installed solar panels on the White House and declared that by the year 2000, 20 percent of America's electricity would be produced by solar power. Just for the record, solar currently accounts for 1 percent of our energy production—12 years after his target date. Now, President Obama is demeaning all traditional energy and claiming that America's future is found in Solyndra, Abound Solar and the Department of Energy.

I hope that all of the new energy technologies to prove to be economically viable, in fact I hope one day my car runs off a pinwheel on the hood ornament. But, focusing on the "energy of the future" while punishing the energy of the present is hurting American jobs and our energy security today. Most of all, people who live paycheck to paycheck are hit hard by higher energy prices. Americans have no issue with new energy resources, but when an "energy proposal for the future" economically devastates our neighbors today, we have to speak out.

The president's two-step plan for American energy seems to be perfectly illustrated by his Oklahoma speech in front of a stack of green empty oil pipe: (1) Green (2) Empty oil pipe.

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