

Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Whitfield
Subcommittee on Energy and Power
Hearing on "American Jobs Now: H.R. 3548, the
North American Energy Access Act"
January 25, 2012
(As Prepared for Delivery)

Today's hearing gives us the opportunity to examine solutions to a problem that shouldn't exist. The problem I'm speaking of is how an administration can be presented with the chance to create tens of thousands of jobs while reducing our dependence on Middle East sources of oil, yet completely squander the opportunity.

Today we're here to look into how such an unacceptable decision was made and how it can be corrected so that we are able to create 20,000 jobs and relieve our dependence on hostile sources of fuel through this project.

The phrase "national interest" should be somewhat simple to understand. If the nation is plagued by persistent unemployment and a private company is willing to spend \$7 billion to construct an infrastructure project, putting over 100,000 people to work – that sounds like something that serves the national interest.

If our President decides that sending aircraft carrier strike groups to the Strait of Hormuz to defend oil flow is in the national interest, then one would also think a pipeline from Canada that would help eliminate our Middle East oil imports also serves the national interest.

Unfortunately, that is not the same conclusion that President Obama reached, stating that they needed more time. Over 3 years was not enough time. Eleven agencies reviewing the pipeline was not enough review.

President Obama's delays could risk losing the project entirely, and even the State Department agrees in its OWN environmental impact statement that the "no action" option (not building the pipeline at all) is the wrong option. But I worry that's where we are headed.

So today we want to ask questions of the Administration and hear their perspective on legislation offered by our colleague Mr. Terry of Nebraska.

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