

INTRODUCTION

We're at a critical moment in the fight against Keystone XL and the tar sands.

Only a few days ago, Obama responded to threats from Congress by promising to veto any bill that required him to approve the Keystone XL pipeline. Now, following a ruling by the Nebraska Supreme Court, the decision about the pipeline is once again in Obama's hands. **We're calling on him to go beyond his veto threat and finally reject this pipeline once and for all.**

We're hoping that this will be the home stretch of the fight against Keystone. But Big Oil is scheming to find other ways to bring tar sands oil into the US through new pipelines, on railcars, and more. So in addition to working to stop the Keystone XL pipeline, **we're campaigning to keep tar sands oil out of Massachusetts entirely**, and we're working to pass dozens of town resolutions in support of a statewide ban on tar sands oil. This is a great moment to get involved! For more information, email Emily, emily@betterfutureproject.org, or see:

http://www.betterfutureproject.org/keep_tar_sands_out_of_ma

Along with national groups like Rainforest Action Network, 350.org, CREDO, Sierra Club, and more, we're calling for vigils all over Massachusetts on Tuesday, January 13th, 2015 to stop the KXL pipeline and ban tar sands oil. This guide should help you plan a vigil in your area!

Detailed descriptions and items for consideration appear on the following pages. If you are comfortable with charging forward, go for it! If you are nervous about the details, dig in to the details! If you have any questions, contact Marla (marla@betterfutureproject.org).

CHECK LIST (the basics)

BEFORE THE VIGIL

- Create your event online at https://actionnetwork.org/event_campaigns/reject-keystone-xl-now and click the red "Host an event for this campaign" button. **If you list**

your event online by Monday, January 12 at 10 am, Emily Kirkland will include it in the 1/12 newsletter to 350MA and in an 1/13 email blast to all 350MA members.

- Define your goals (page 5-6) and consider the logistics of your location (page 6-7)
- Determine who will take on specific roles (page 8-9)
- Decide which materials you want/need, such as candles and signs (page 9-11)
- Print sign-in sheets (first name, last name, email, phone number, town)
- Plan for how to begin, move through, and close the vigil (page 11-13). Detailed notes on tone, image and messaging are in the section beginning “THIS TUESDAY” (page 4)
- Consider contacting the media about your event. For advice about how to do that, check out: <http://350ma.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/350MA-Media-Resources-Media-Timelines-Pitching-Tips-Template-Advisories-and-Press-Releases.pdf>

DURING THE VIGIL

- Arrive early to set up and be ready to greet people
- Make sure everyone signs in

AFTER THE VIGIL

- Clean up your location and make sure that information on sign-in sheets gets recorded.
- Send photos of the vigil to emily@betterfutureproject.org

TYPES OF VIGILS (background information and thoughts about tone)

A vigil is a nonviolent public act of conscience and witness that we use in a number of ways. It is important to determine your goals for hosting a vigil in order to plan for the tone and content that will help you to achieve those goals. **If you need to jump right into the work for the vigils on January 13th, 2015 opposing the Keystone XL pipeline, jump to the 2nd bullet point.**

There are at least four types (and we sometimes merge two types into one vigil):

Reactive: bearing witness/showing solidarity/creating a space for grieving

- To show solidarity with victims of crime, natural disasters, systemic oppression, and other tragedies (both preventable and unpreventable).
- While calls might be made to give funds or materials to support relief efforts, these events are generally less activist and more focused on creating a space to grieve and to show solidarity with those who are suffering.
- Any call to action that is not grounded in alleviating the immediate suffering of those impacted will sound opportunistic.
- Avoid calling on participants to engage in specific efforts for change. Affirm a commitment to engage in social change work because it offers appropriate reasons to hope for a better future. Avoid rallying for change in the time set aside for grieving.

Reactive: activating/mobilizing people to act/calling leaders to change

Note: this applies to the #NoKXL vigils on January 13th, 2015

- To protest decisions or failure to act that resulted in policies that undermine a safe, livable future.
- These events may reference the suffering caused by the actions or inactions they stand against, but they are not spaces for grieving.
- These events offer people who feel hopeless or angry a way to join with others to push for changes that might reverse a recent decision or change the course of an ongoing failure of systems or of public policy.
- These events may feel like rallies or protests as they unfold. It is important to offer participants a concrete set of actions they can take to join the movement for change.
- The best “asks” offer not only one-time actions (like signing a petition), but also avenues for deeper engagement in the work in an ongoing way.
- These events can be counter-productive and can create despair or unproductive anger if participants leave without a “theory of change” (a credible narrative about how change can happen – how we get from where we are to the change we are calling for).

Proactive: bearing witness to realities that media do not cover or leaders ignore

- To raise awareness, calling for media coverage and attention from leaders who are overlooking an important concern.
- Such a vigil is often an attempt to force public figures to take a position and to raise the level of general public awareness. One example is Better Future Project's Vigil to End Climate Silence (a week-long, round-the-clock outdoor vigil aimed at forcing both U.S. Senate candidates to take a comprehensive public position on climate). Participants in this vigil did not ask the candidates to take any particular position, rather, they called on the media and the candidates to "break the silence" in the campaign about climate change. In order to get the kind of attention that such an event requires to reach its goals, creative tactics are required. In the example above, every three hours (round-the-clock), those present at the vigil called the campaign offices of each candidate, leaving voicemail in the overnight hours. Each call described the goals of the group, the time of day, inclement weather conditions if relevant, and the number assembled.
- This kind of vigil usually only garners adequate attention if it appears to others that the participants are willing to suffer some discomfort for the cause and if "ordinary people" or other unlikely participants are clearly involved (not just hard-core activist types).
- While messaging and visuals are always important, it is important to remember that if this type of vigil succeeds, the messaging and visuals of the vigil itself will likely transfer into the newly-created public discourse. In other words, it is important to recognize that public figures and the media may begin to tell the story with your messaging and your images (at least for a time) if you are successful.
- Choose your messaging and your staging/signs/language/messengers wisely!

Proactive: activating/mobilizing people to act/calling leaders to act

- To take a public stand (often with people in other communities) to call for decisions or shifts in priorities that will enact policies that help to create a better future.
- We hold this kind of vigil on the eve of an important decision or deadline to show that we are united in calling for a particular outcome (and often to pledge to take specific actions in response to particular outcomes).
- This sort of vigil is generally a mix of both the solemn recognition of what is at stake (and sometimes of what is already lost) and the courage of our convictions to stand for what we believe is right.
- These vigils are hopeful from the start, inspired by the realization that our leaders can make the right choice. We are giving them the visible signal of our support for right action, and we are demonstrating that wrong action will not cause us to stop fighting for our cause.
- For this type of vigil, make sure that someone illustrates (in words or otherwise) the better future that will result from leaders making the right choice, as well as the dire consequences of choosing wrongly. We are making the choice (and the stakes) clear to one another, to the public, and to our leaders.
- Energy at the beginning of such vigils should be welcoming and hopeful. Everyone should have an opportunity to speak (whether individually or by participating in a collective call-an-response reading/pledge).
- The mood should be empowering, and the focus on the decision-maker.
- It is appropriate to ask for commitments from participants particularly if these commitments reinforce and strengthen the focus and pressure you are putting on the decision-maker.
- The visuals for this event are generally devised with the goal of producing a particular photo or video image to send to the decision-maker and to post on social media.
- The goal is to create an image of tenacity and commitment (and to gather people together in a way that makes the group appear as large as you can make it appear).

- Signs that appear in this image should include simple, clear messaging and should be easy to read from a distance.

Of course, sometimes, a vigil can be a combination of reactive and proactive, as well as combining bearing witness/showing solidarity and activating/calling for action.

Getting Organized: A quick how-to on planning your vigil

1. Define Event Goals

What is our overall goal?

(not super big picture. I suggest “Block the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline and ban tar sands oil from Massachusetts”)

How does this event help us move toward our overall goal?

e.g., “For our vigils on Tuesday, we will join with thousands of others to show that there is a strong, determined, and nimble grassroots movement in every corner of this nation. It is a show of unity, strength, and resolve that President Obama will notice and take seriously as he weighs his decision. In addition, we are working to spread the word about our efforts to ban tar sands oil from MA”

2. Audience *(in this case, each vigil team may have a different set of answers)*

Whom do you hope to reach?

Do you want to reach out to your community, to decision-makers, to both?

3. Desired Outcome of this Event

Be specific!

- a. *Convince President Obama to deny the permit for the Keystone XL pipeline.*
- b. *Spread the word about the effort to ban tar sands oil from Massachusetts*
- c. *Your local group may add other desired outcomes, such as raising awareness about the group itself among concerned members of the community in order to draw new people into the work.*

These 3 sets of goals should guide the rest of your preparation.

1. Type of vigil, length and location

- a. **Keep the expected length and attendance of the vigil at a realistic level.**

From start to finish, the Tuesday night vigils should probably last 30 minutes to one hour, depending on the weather conditions, the tone, and the attendance. Smaller crowds lend themselves to briefer vigils. If you think that people will trickle in because of the time of day, consider having music/singing or a social interaction planned for people as they arrive, beginning a formal program for the vigil 15-30 minutes after the published start time.

- b. **Location** (Do your best with available options!)

Does the space fit the tone and purpose of your event?

Is it easily accessible?

Some points on location:

- You are taking a strategic, conscientious stand in a public place, and you do not have time to get a permit (this time). If you can get access to private property (like the front lawn of a church building or private school or home in a visible area), then use that space! If not, be polite, be firm, and ask for forgiveness when necessary. If you are asked to disperse, do NOT disobey the order of a police officer, though you may be able to ask for advice about where to move to.
- You generally do not need a permit to assemble on public sidewalks or other hardscape in groups of 25 or smaller as long as you do NOT block pedestrian traffic or building entrances.
- In larger public spaces, such as parks or plazas, groups that gather peacefully and without amplification in large numbers are generally tolerated without a permit as long as they do not block other common uses of the space. For example, a 70-person NoKXL candlelight vigil on the plaza at Copley Square in 2012 was unpermitted, and police did not ask us to disperse.
- Think carefully about sound in your location. Will there be a lot of vehicle or other transit noise? The sounds of street musicians? Boisterous crowds of pedestrians headed to popular spots? An adjacent sports field? If your only or best choice is a space with a lot of background noise, think carefully about how you will ask people to arrange themselves. One large open circle is nice, but in a loud location, it is often better to draw people in closer so everyone can hear. If you are using candles, think carefully about how to keep everyone safe while gathered closer together.
- Be conscious of the weather and the comfort of those who gather. Sometimes, you just have to cut it short or give up on keeping the candles lit because it's too cold, too windy, or too rainy.

- Choose a location that you think you can fill (or nearly fill). You don't want to look small because you've gathered in an enormous space. In 2009, we decided to plan a large climate rally in a small park (instead of the go-to Boston Common) because we had learned that photos of hundreds of people on the Boston Common made the crowd look small and unimpressive. If your location is a lot bigger than your crowd, find a more enclosed or contained space for the photo.

2. Materials, Equipment, and Roles (Keep it simple!)

You'll need:

An emcee (or more than one) with a plan!

- This type of gathering can feel very organic to participants, but it is VERY important to create a plan for opening the space, how to move through the time, and closing the space. This helps people to know what to do next and to know when the vigil is over. If the program lacks direction, people will leave early because they assume there is no plan for ending.
- Each leader should know their role and the roles of other leaders. They should all have a copy of the order of programming (complete with general timing cues), and one person should be responsible for keeping the program moving and on-track. This "director" may be one of the speakers, but this is not necessary.
- Be sure to thank the participants for coming, both at the beginning and the end of the vigil. Make sure they hear how to find out about getting more involved locally with people who are already taking other actions to ensure a better future.

Greeter(s) with-in sheets

- For this event, it is appropriate to invite people to sign in with their email accounts (and perhaps additional contact information) in order get on our lists so we can keep them updated. If they RSVP'ed online, we do NOT have their info. RAN has it and is not sharing it with us, though they may share it with the national level partners, like 350.org and CREDO.
- If you have a flier about your node and when it meets, plan to have copies available. There are basic 350MA fliers at 350ma.org.

- Make sure the Greeter(s) know what to do with the sign-in sheets and that the information gets recorded and shared with the node leaders and to Emily Kirkland at the Better Future Project office (emily@betterfutureproject.org)

A photographer

- At least one person committed to taking photos (with a digital camera or a newer camera phone that performs well in the dark)
- You'll need to decide who will share photos with Better Future Project (email emily@betterfutureproject.org). Please make sure that photos are shared as soon as possible after the event.

Social Media

- If someone in your group will be posting to Facebook or Twitter during or after the event, please suggest that they use the hashtag #noKXL. On Twitter, we appreciate tagging your posts with references to our shared group: @350Mass and @BetterFuturePro
- We will have volunteers on Twitter and Facebook during the time of the vigils retweeting and sharing your posts, so be sure to use the #noKXL tag (so that we see them)!

Candles (or not)

- Decide whether you want to use candles. Many Christian congregations keep vigil style candles for Christmas Eve and Easter vigil. You may be able to borrow some. If you use candles, remember a LIGHTER. Maybe two. It is not necessary to have any kind of illumination in order to have a vigil. If it's too much trouble, skip it!
- NOTE: candles can get messy! If you are on a hard surface with candles, you will leave behind visible droppings of wax. Be mindful of whether this is appropriate and whether you should clean it up (the edge of a credit card is a good tool for scraping wax off the sidewalk). Also note: lit candles may draw unwanted attention from police, though we have not had any trouble on Copley Square or Harvard Square using lit candles for vigils.

Participant Comfort

- It is wise to gather near benches or other comfortable places to sit (or to bring some folding chairs) so that people who may not be able to stand for the entire vigil can join you comfortably.
- For longer events, consider providing water or getting access to a water fountain.

Signs and Banners

- It is important to be able to demonstrate to those passing by who you are and why you are gathered. It is also important to be able to show these things in a photo. If you have a 350MA banner, please bring it and include it in your photo. If you have one that reads “350 Massachusetts: a Better Future project,” please choose that banner.
- If you use your own signs, please be sure to stay on-message. At every large event, you can find a sign that reads something like “screw the economy, save the planet.” We ask that you leave any signs like that at home because they send a message to others that you may not intend. Likewise, a sign that just reads “save the planet” does not address the specific decision we are calling on President Obama to make.

Other printed materials

- You will want to create and print a few copies of a “program” for the event for use by those working together to keep it going. You do not need to distribute a program to participants, so it doesn’t need to be pretty.
- If you want people to join in song, it is wise to print some song sheets with the words.
- If you want people to join a call and response, even if the response is short, you may wish to make a sign with the response in large letters to hold up at the right time or to print it on slips of paper.
- Likewise, if you are including a responsive or unison reading, you’ll need enough copies for people to share.

Sound

- Amplification is usually not the right choice for a vigil unless you have a professional system and power to keep it running. Keep this in mind when selecting any speakers or emcees for your vigil. They need to be able to project, speak slowly, and enunciate clearly.

Snacks

- The MetroWest node always brings food to their gatherings. This is a welcoming and community-building gesture if you have time to make it happen.

Sample Vigil Program and Messaging

7pm – Gathering

- Greeters welcome participants, asking them to sign-in
- Perhaps someone is playing music or a group is responsible for engaging newcomers in conversation
- Perhaps snacks are available
- Signs and candles (if you are using them) may be distributed.
- DO NOT JUST START LIGHTING CANDLES RANDOMLY. If you are using candles, see the sample program item at 7:33 pm.

7:15 – Formal Welcome

- The emcee gathers the group with a brief welcome and provides any instruction for where to stand/sit and how to incorporate those who show up later
- Once people are arranged as the emcee wishes, emcee does a self-introduction (including any organizational affiliations). Remember, that *350 Massachusetts is NOT 350.org*. We would prefer that you say “350 Massachusetts is a program of Better Future Project” because it helps people to understand where the staff support and other resources (like this guide) come from!
- Next, Describe the flow of the event (agenda) and point out any logistics (don’t block the sidewalk, bathrooms are available over there, sign-in sheets and snacks and info about our meetings are at the table there)
- Thank everyone for taking the time to come!

7:25 – Why we are here and our goals!

- The emcee or another speaker should provide a concise description of why we have gathered, what is at stake, and what our goals are tonight. This speaker’s role is to paint a picture of a very clear and urgent moral choice. Facts are useful here, but if you use too much technical language or too many numbers (without visuals), someone who is new to this work or to the details about Keystone XL will become confused. People do not change their commitments or priorities based on facts alone. People are moved to change when they connect on an emotional and values level with the realities of a situation. So paint the picture of

the problem with your words: what will the destruction and pollution from KXL look like? What will the problems it causes for the future look like? What does a future built on better choices look like? Remember to point out that there is a sole decision-maker in this process and that he (President Obama) is the person to whom we are speaking tonight.

- DO NOT ALLOW THIS PORTION TO LAST MORE THAN 10 MINUTES. 5 is best, 8 is alright. 10 is the max.

7:33 – Community Time/Sharing/Singing/Chanting/Moving

Next, you should plan something creative, interactive, and/or personal. The primary goal here is to get people physically and emotionally connected to the message and to one another. Otherwise, they are just listening and might remain more passive. Let's activate them!

IF YOU HAVE CANDLES, NOW IS THE TIME TO LIGHT THEM! Some sort of ritual or description of the act of lighting the candle is useful to create a sense of meaning in the act. For example: *We light these candles to show the world that we are united in opposing the Keystone XL pipeline.*

Some options include:

- Group singing (with a song-leader, please!)
- A reading that is passed from one person to the next, each reading aloud a paragraph (testimony from a person whose has been negatively impacted by tar sands development is a good choice here. You can find stories online quite easily). If you choose this, make sure one person introduces the reading and provides the context (including who the “speaker” is and any important details about them, for example, “This story comes from First Nations woman who lives downstream from tar sands mining. Her children are sick, and they are afraid to drink the water...”)
- Open time for individuals to speak. (We suggest offering a guiding question: I am calling on President Obama to deny the KXL permit because...). Leave space for people to speak, and do not require everyone to speak to the group.
- A litany or call-and-response. You may not have time to write one, and you may not have an appropriate reading for this. When there is time, this is a powerful tool for a vigil crowd.
- A symbolic act that each person could take. One example is picking up a pebble or a blade of grass or leaf and bringing it (with some verbal or internal intention) to a certain space that we have given symbolic meaning as a sign of commitment to be in this work together. People could verbalize their particular commitment, but this may be too challenging for people who are new to the group or the work.
- Any sort of creative movement exercise would be terrific here.

7:50 – Photo Shoot!

- Don't forget the photos! Send them to emily@betterfutureproject.org. Make sure your email says where you are, your group identity, and how many people were present.

- Have fun with this, but make sure you have a plan for how to stage the photo in advance. Try to be framed by walls or trees or structures that make your group appear as large as the space available to you, but don't spread the people out... that makes you look small, too!
- Ask participants to stay where they are when the photos are finished for a closing word.

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8pm – Closing Words

- Thank everyone for coming.
- Make any announcements you wish to make about your local meeting times, local resolutions to ban tar sands oil, etc.
- Final words should be a hopeful recap of why we gathered, what is at stake, and the fact that President Obama has the power to make the right decision for our future. (It doesn't hurt to follow that with a final invitation to join the ongoing work in Massachusetts).

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8:07 – Answer Questions, Chat, Clean Up, Circulate Sign-in Sheets!