

# Climate Change Keystone XL, Sequestration and Beyond



FEAR IS A TWO- EDGED SWORD. Fear of Climate Change & its effects is justified and important. But how can activists fight corporate-backed FEAR AT WORK?

**CLIMATE ACTIVISTS** are justifiably fearful of the changes that runaway “Global Warming” can make to our world.

But “fear at work” also is an effective weapon for corporations and banks and their political servants, elected and otherwise, who are fighting to maintain the carbon-based status quo. Through the Tea Party, the Republican Party and right-wing think tanks, the fossil fuel industry is working to block progress on combating climate change by spreading mistrust of science and government and by promoting fears of job losses if Americans try to replace our carbon based economy with a saner and greener one.

Working families in the U.S., those that are paying attention, rightly fear the **violent, destructive storms, droughts and wildfires** that already are accompanying climate change, even without the added carbon-intensive tar sands development the Keystone pipeline would enable.

But working Americans also fear **potential higher energy costs** that the power companies are claiming would result from actually jettisoning fossil fuels and adopting alternative energy sources. American construction workers of all trades, and their unions, fear **the loss of good, skilled jobs** now being dangled by corporate proponents of the pipeline and other mega-energy projects that can only make “global warming” worse.

While corporations play on our economic fears, the centuries-old, accelerating process of industrial growth under basically capitalist auspices threatens to make planetary warming irreversible. As democratic socialists, we say **all progressive forces have to fight back for public control of this dangerous moment.**

**FEAR** drives both sides of the debate over the Keystone XL pipeline. **Why is this disastrously bad energy project even being considered by the Obama administration** and some of its allies? Because the energy companies that hope to profit from it are proposing to put money into creating the relatively few decent-paying **jobs** that many Americans in the depressed construction trades have seen for years.

**Why is the future course of U.S. energy development largely being dictated by the same corporations that have brought our nation to its knees**, both environmentally and economically? Because our formally democratic government, which is supposed to champion the public interest, is all too often in the hands of the corporate lobbyists who also dominate fundraising for both major political parties.

The odious Keystone XL project reveals the web of global corporate influence that constrains public investments in the public interest and that has tilted U.S. government policies into favoring, even subsidizing, private investments **against** the public interest.

As climate activists battle to stop the pipeline, we must tackle the wider task of reversing the stranglehold of private capital on the public's consciousness and the government's choices. And because economics is critically important to how most voters think, climate activists must counter the economic "Fear at Work" campaign that the fossil fuel advocates are deploying to keep our society captive to their agenda.

To counter Economic Fear, climate activists must:

- Support not a "carbon tax" that people have been told will cause higher consumer prices, but instead support what climate scientist James Hansen has called a "fee and rebate" plan, one that would tax carbon-based fuels at the source, then use the money to fund generous tax refunds for all Americans on a per capita basis. We must work to insure that the majority will gain income—not lose it—from carbon curbs.
- Join with construction unions in fighting for more funding of needed infrastructure repair and construction projects, especially green ones, so that construction workers can have decent-paying jobs that are environmentally sustainable.
- Support President Obama and political progressives—and even political conservatives, if they cooperate—in promoting greater federal funding for public transit systems and renewable energy development, again with the objective of promoting "green" jobs.
- Support the existing Labor Network for Sustainability (LNS) and the "Blue Green Alliance" of conservationists and labor unions in its work to promote green jobs.
- Strenuously oppose any deficit-driven "Sequestration" deal that defunds needed social programs, thus increasing the financial stress on millions of Americans and pushing them towards supporting even dirty and destructive energy projects for economic reasons.

**Climate-friendly alternative development can support the creation of good, skilled jobs when managed by the public in its own interest—not captured by corporations.** A key step towards such development must include a **publicly managed jobs program** to transition from carbon-based energy to alternative energy, but without the disruptive job losses that workers rightly fear if alternative energy development is left up to corporate and/or market forces alone.

**TELL YOUR REPRESENTATIVES** to fight "sequester" cutbacks in social spending and to back public renewable energy jobs and a "cap and dividend" plan as the first step toward freeing American politics from the corporate politics of fear. **Alternative energy will benefit, not burden, consumers**, if working people get their say. American democracy should guarantee us a voice in what kind of energy is produced—and with what impacts on employment—and by whom.

*Credit: Metro Washington DC DSA*

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