

DAILY NEWS CLIPS

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HOUSE REPUBLICANS REVIVE BID TO ADVANCE KEYSTONE PIPELINE

By Jim Snyder
Bloomberg News
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U.S. House Republicans, unsuccessful in overturning President Barack Obama's rejection of the Keystone XL pipeline permit, will try again this week, using legislation to extend highway spending for three months.

Passage in the House would give Republican leaders another chance to advance the pipeline as gasoline prices remain higher than \$3.90 a gallon. Language in the legislation, which would pay for highway, bridge and transit programs through September, gives the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission 30 days to issue a permit for the pipeline. A vote may be scheduled on April 18.

Representative Fred Upton of Michigan, the House Energy and Commerce Committee chairman, said in the Republican's April 14 weekly radio address that Keystone would "have decreased our dependence on oil from unstable regions of the world."

The Keystone section in the highway bill is identical to legislation the House approved on Feb. 16 as part of a larger transportation package that some Republicans said cost too much.

In the Senate, Democrats on March 9 blocked an amendment to the transportation bill that effectively would approve Keystone without further federal action, with 11 Democrats joining Republicans in support.

"Gas prices have doubled under President Obama, but the Senate-passed transportation bill does nothing to help," Michael Steel, a spokesman for House Speaker John Boehner, an Ohio Republican, said in an e-mailed statement.

'Too Early'

Adam Jentleson, a spokesman for Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid, said Senate leaders haven't been able to assess whether support exists among lawmakers for the Keystone XL project if FERC is given jurisdiction to issue the permit. Senators return today after a two-week recess.

“It’s too early to say,” Jentleson said today.

The \$7 billion TransCanada Corp. (TRP) pipeline would carry crude from Alberta’s oil sands to refineries along the Gulf Coast. Obama rejected in January the company’s application because he said a deadline set by Congress for action, imposed after the project was delayed until 2013, didn’t allow sufficient time to weigh potential environmental risks.

Officials in Nebraska objected to the pipeline’s route across Nebraska’s Sandhills region, which overlays the Ogallala aquifer that provides drinking water for 1.5 million people.

The House highway bill would extend funding for three months. While the Republican-led House and the Democratic- controlled Senate passed a 90-day extension before the two-week congressional recess at the end of March, the two sides have been unable to agree to a longer-term deal.

The Senate passed a two-year extension of the highway bill without language on Keystone in March. The Republican highway measure may allow the House and Senate to begin a conference committee to try to reach a compromise on the impasse.

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TN FRESHMEN TOP VETERANS IN FUNDRAISING

By Elizabeth Bewley

The Tennessean

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Newcomers often are bigger political targets, expert says

First-term Republican Reps. Stephen Fincher, Diane Black and Chuck Fleischmann are outpacing the state’s veteran lawmakers in fundraising this year, according to new campaign finance reports filed with the Federal Election Commission.

Fincher, of Frog Jump, brought in \$268,693 during the first three months of the year, while Black, of Gallatin, raised \$257,748. Fleischmann, of Ooltewah in East Tennessee, raised \$207,048.

The delegation’s senior House members raised much less during the first three months of the year. For example, Republican Rep. Marsha Blackburn of Brentwood brought in \$144,853, and Democratic Rep. Jim Cooper of Nashville raised \$74,015.

Blackburn and Fincher had more money at the end of the quarter than most delegation members — more than \$1.2 million each.

Bruce Oppenheimer, a political science professor at Vanderbilt University, said freshman lawmakers often raise money more aggressively than more senior lawmakers because their seats are usually more vulnerable.

“If you’re going to have a real challenge, either in the primary or in the general election, it very likely will come after your first term, especially in seats that you took away from the other party,” Oppenheimer said.

Fleischmann faces primary challenges from Weston Wamp, son of former Rep. Zach Wamp, and Scottie Mayfield, president of Mayfield Dairy Farms. Both had more than \$416,000 in cash on March 31. Fleischmann had \$759,526.

Republican Rep. Scott DesJarlais, who faces a general-election challenge from Democratic state Sen. Eric Stewart, raised \$127,530 in the first quarter and had \$510,863 at the end of last month.

DesJarlais received \$5,000 from a political action committee affiliated with House Speaker John Boehner of Ohio and \$2,500 from Fincher’s PAC, called the Funding Republicans Supporting Opportunity and Growth (FROG) Jump PAC.

“Our first-quarter goal was to make certain we had over a half-million cash on hand,” said Brandon Lewis, DesJarlais’ campaign manager. “These resources will help us to continue our mission of being a conservative, independent voice in Washington.”

Stewart raised \$96,227 during the first quarter and has \$147,664 remaining.

Despite their prolific fund-raising, Black and Fincher have no serious challengers so far.

Oppenheimer said they may plan to donate to the campaigns of other Republicans, which he said helps lawmakers gain influence among their colleagues. Black gave \$50,000 to the National Republican Congressional Committee in November. Fincher has donated more than \$14,000 to the group, which helps fund campaigns of Republican candidates.

“Even when you’re safe, you raise money,” Oppenheimer said. “Everyone knows the story of somebody who’s seemed perfectly safe and lost.”

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