

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear President Biden,

Your presidency is a watershed in human history, the last chance to turn the tide before climate disruption spirals out of control. We worked hard for your election in part because you embraced that challenge as a defining strength of your candidacy. And we are encouraged and grateful that you clearly signaled your resolve by rejecting the Keystone XL pipeline on day 1. The “climate test” for the KXL decision was clear and compelling. We ask you to apply it now to the Enbridge Line 3 pipeline.

President Obama, frustrated by the KXL controversy, once said, “It’s just a pipe.” His view evolved, and his 2015 decision reflected the symbolic significance of the outcome, as well as the very real impact it would have made on GHG emissions. He made it clear that he rejected KXL both on its specific flaws and on principle, because it failed to pass the test of climate responsibility. Approving it would have undermined America’s standing to lead the global campaign for climate solutions. And beyond its symbolic importance, scientific and economic analysis of the project established a practical imperative - a “keystone,” if you will - for effective climate action: To successfully address the climate crisis, we must stop expanding fossil fuel infrastructure that economically locks us into excessive emissions.

But if the principle established in the KXL decision applied only to one project, it would be no principle at all, and we could have no coherent or effective climate policy. The hopeful and galvanizing force of your decision to overturn the Trump Administration's approval of the project was about much more than a pipe. It was about finally turning the tide with a resolute American commitment to serious, science-based climate action – a hallmark of your candidacy and, we believe, a pillar of your Presidency.

The imperative to end fossil fuel infrastructure expansion is common sense, backed by multiple lines of scientific and economic research. Most recently, the International Energy Agency – a decidedly pro-energy and notoriously cautious institution – called for an end to new investment in fossil fuels. Your administration clearly takes climate science seriously, but major new fossil fuel development flouts the most practical implication of that science.

As significant as the climate policy implications, Line 3 violates the rights and lifeways of the Anishinaabe people by endangering the headwaters of the Mississippi River, including critical areas for hunting, fishing, harvesting wild rice, and cultural resources -- rights that the US is bound by treaty and integrity to uphold. At this time of reckoning with our history, we need to move forward in the spirit of reconciliation toward our national ideals. As you said in your historic Memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation to Nation Relationships on January 26, “It is a priority of my Administration to make respect for Tribal sovereignty and self-governance, commitment to fulfilling Federal trust and treaty responsibilities to Tribal Nations, and regular, meaningful, and robust

consultation with Tribal Nations cornerstones of Federal Indian policy.” This project would do the opposite.

So we write now with an urgent plea to stop construction of Line 3 immediately. This pipeline is virtually identical to KXL in both substantive climate impact and symbolic importance. Construction of the project is an unfolding human rights crisis. Operating it over its lifetime would significantly exacerbate the climate crisis. It fails any reasonable test of climate justice.

In politics you win some and you lose some. But treating this as a political balancing act – pleasing climate advocates on one pipeline and appeasing fossil fuel interests on the next – would not be realistic climate policy. If we are to do what science and justice demand and the Paris Accord promises, we must stop fanning the flames and focus on solutions. We are asking you to reject Line 3 and to firmly establish the principle that we will move forward toward real climate solutions – not forward and backward simultaneously, only forward. This principle should be applied consistently, starting with a review of all major projects that your predecessor - a climate denier - approved.

Climate leadership of course means much more than ending pipeline construction, and we’re inspired by your administration’s comprehensive approach. The American Jobs Plan would launch us toward a livable future with major investments in the clean energy economy, healthy communities, and good jobs – many of them comparable to jobs foregone in pipeline construction. It’s a much more robust employment policy than propping up obsolete fossil fuel industries; it would create more jobs in remediation and replacing lead pipes than all the new pipelines combined, and an order of magnitude more jobs in the rapidly growing clean energy economy. In the specific context of oil pipelines, there are thousands of miles of badly deteriorating pipelines -- including the original Line 3 itself -- that need to be removed. That work could provide jobs for workers displaced by cancellation of Line 3.

As the IEA affirmed, there is simply no time and no need for fossil fuel expansion. We can build a stronger, fairer economy and healthier communities starting now, with existing, affordable clean energy and transportation solutions. The only thing prolonging the fossil fuel era is entrenched political and economic power. And the only way to seriously tackle the climate crisis is to stand up to that power before it’s too late, before they convert that power into physical infrastructure that economically blocks our path to solutions.

The time to deliver on the promise of a safe climate and good jobs in a clean energy-powered economy is the next 8 years. But the time – the only time – to keep hope alive by preventing fossil fuel commitments that would foreclose that bright prospect is right now.

Please end the era of fossil fuel expansion decisively, so we can begin the era of clean energy and climate solutions with all the hope and commitment it requires. Science, justice, and the boundless American capacity to tackle big challenges are on our side. Time is not.

With appreciation and determination,

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