TITLE: Opposition to Construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline and Urging the U.S. to Reduce Reliance on Oil from Tar Sands and Instead, to Work towards Cleaner, Sustainable Energy Solutions

WHEREAS, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendents the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

WHEREAS, a major oil transmission pipeline is planned to extend from northern Alberta, Canada, from areas that have sand mixed with tar and oil, called “tar sands,” to refineries in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the route of the pipeline, called Keystone XL because it is the second oil transmission pipeline to be constructed by the same company that built the first Keystone pipeline, crosses through Indian country in northern Alberta, Saskatchewan, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska, near and potentially over, many culturally significant areas for Tribal Nations within those provinces and states; and

WHEREAS, based on the relatively poor environmental record of the first Keystone pipeline, which includes numerous spills, U.S. regulators shut the pipeline down in late May, 2011, and, therefore, based on the record of the first Keystone pipeline, and other factors, it is probable that further environmental disasters will occur in Indian country if the new pipeline is allowed to be constructed; and

WHEREAS, the First Nations of Canada, representing the vast majority of First Nations impacted by “tar sands” development, have unanimously passed resolutions supporting a moratorium on new “tar sands” development and expansion until a “cumulative effects management system” is in place, and are also in opposition to the pipeline; and
BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2011 Mid-Year Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Frontier Airlines Center in Milwaukee, WI on June 13-16, 2011, with a quorum present.

[Signature]
President

ATTEST:
[Signature]
Recording Secretary
Keystone XL Tar Sands Oil Pipeline Poses Grave Dangers to Tribal Nations

NCAI opposes Keystone XL Tar Sands Oil Pipeline; calls for energy demand to be met by responsible energy development

WASHINGTON, DC — In anticipation of a forthcoming Environmental Impact Statement by U.S. State Department on the proposed Keystone XL Oil Pipeline, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) issued a statement today saying the proposed pipeline expansion could severely impact Native American communities and poses grave dangers if it is constructed. The statement released by NCAI, the nation's oldest, largest, and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native advocacy organization, reafirms the position of its members and expresses solidarity with Canadian First Nations concerned about the project.

The Keystone XL pipeline ... would threaten, among other things, water aquifers, water ways, cultural sites, agricultural lands, animal life, public drinking water sources and other resources vital to the peoples of the region in which the pipeline is proposed to be constructed, reads an NCAI resolution (PDF) passed at the organization's most recent gathering of members this past June.

The organization is calling for domestic energy demands to be met by developing energy resources responsibly in order to protect vital natural resources, such as vast water reserves.

Homeland and economic security starts with energy security, but Indian Country wants it to be done right; not at the expense of the health of our communities and resources, both tribal and non-tribal, said Jefferson Keel, President of NCAI, citing the importance of looking to clean domestic energy as a more reliable solution. During challenging economic times in our country and in our tribal nations, domestic energy when developed responsibly can create jobs while ensuring that our people and natural resources remain safe and plentiful.

The proposed expansion of the pipeline would cross through northern Alberta, Saskatchewan, Montana, South Dakota, Nebraska, and Oklahoma with potential devastating impacts on communities in surrounding areas and states. A recent study by a University of Nebraska hydrologist outlines a worst case spill scenario, estimating that Keystone XL could spill as much as 7.9 million gallons in Nebraska's Sandhills, polluting 5 billion gallons of groundwater with benzene, contaminating water used for agriculture and drinking drawn from the Ogallala Aquifer, and more than 6.9 million gallons of tar sands crude at the Yellowstone River crossing. That estimate far exceeds the Exxon Mobil's July 1, 2011 spill of 42,000 gallons near the Apsalooke (Crow) Nation territory in south-central Montana, contaminating 240 miles of the Yellowstone River.

Responsible alternatives to importing energy resources from outside the United States are abundant, and specifically on tribal lands. In addition to plentiful traditional energy options on tribal lands, the National Renewable Energy Lab's (NREL) estimates that the wind potential in Indian Country could provide 32 percent of U.S. annual electric generation, where as solar energy potential in Indian Country equals twice the total amount of electricity the U.S. generates per year.

The U.S. State Department is expected to issue the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the pipeline in mid-August. Following the issuance of the FEIS, the State Department will undergo a 90-day process