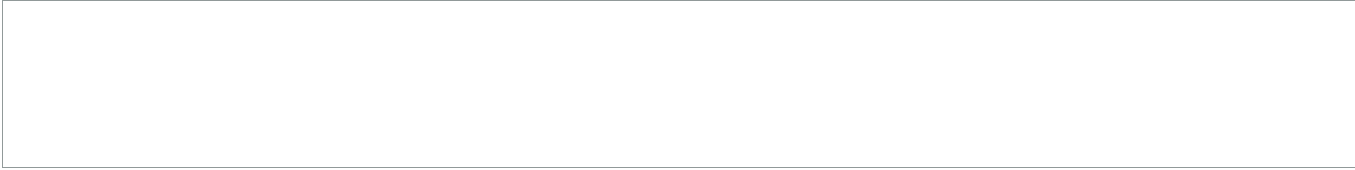


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House, Senate to vote on Keystone XL pipeline



By **Ed O'Keefe** November 12 at 5:38 PM  [Follow @edatpost](#)

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Landrieu pushes to approve Keystone XL pipeline (1:25)

Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-La.) moved quickly on Wednesday to force the U.S. Senate to pass a long-stalled bill allowing the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline. Senate leaders agreed to hold a vote as early as next Tuesday. Her GOP opponent, Rep. Bill Cassidy (R-La.), has secured assurances that the House will vote on the matter as early as Thursday. (AP)

This item updated at 9:30 p.m.

For the first time in the six-year fight over the controversial [Keystone XL pipeline](#), both houses of Congress will hold a

vote on the proposed project, which has become a sudden flash point in a runoff election for a Senate seat in Louisiana.

The two lawmakers locked in a tight Senate runoff election, Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-La.) and Rep. Bill Cassidy (R-La.), seized control of the congressional agenda Wednesday, extracting assurances from House and Senate leaders that votes will be held to bypass President Obama's authority and authorize construction of the pipeline.

A large showing of Democratic support for the pipeline could complicate the administration's decision-making process, given the party's dismal showing at the polls last week.

Environmentalist allies of the president are solidly against the project and have been doggedly lobbying the administration against approving it.

But Republicans successfully used the president's environmental and climate agenda as key lines of attack against Democrats in several contested midterm races.

Acknowledging the importance of energy to the Louisiana economy, Landrieu and Cassidy have championed construction of the pipeline, which would transport oil from tar sands of Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. The GOP-controlled House voted several times in recent years to support the pipeline, while the Senate, in deference to the administration's review, has resisted holding a vote on the matter despite strong objections from several moderate Democratic senators from rural or energy-rich states.

The pipeline has been under review by the State Department for six years, which has jurisdiction because the project crosses international borders. Democrats from energy-producing states, such as Landrieu, have joined Republicans

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in calling for its approval.

Sen. Joe Manchin III (D-W.Va.) voiced strong support for the plan on Wednesday, saying that “it would be a tremendous windfall for all of us. It’s something we can count on. And I can’t for the life of me understand why we haven’t to date been able to move this piece of legislation forward.”

A Senate vote next week will allow Landrieu to say that she voted for the project and put some distance between her and Obama.

Whether Congress can authorize constructing the pipeline has been the source of debate between Republicans pining for its construction and environmental groups who say the powers rest solely with Obama.

But supporters say that Congress can use its power to regulate commerce with foreign countries to authorize the project. The legislation as written would authorize constructing the pipeline and use a January 2014 environmental-impact report by the State Department to satisfy federal requirements that the project be studied for adverse environmental effects.

After their midterm losses, there is little political fallout for Senate Democrats to worry about. Landrieu, Manchin and at least nine other Democrats support building the pipeline, and Republicans are expected to make up the bulk of the votes approving the plan in the Senate next week. Even if it doesn’t pass this year, the GOP has long vowed to approve the pipeline once they won total control of Congress.

With three weeks of campaigning to go until their runoff, Landrieu and Cassidy came back to Washington at the start of

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primarily on passing a short-term spending bill, paring down a list of Obama administration nominations and perhaps reaching an agreement to extend some tax breaks.

But in recent days, several Democrats and Republicans have cited authorization of the oil pipeline as a modest proposal that could be used to restore bipartisan cooperation in the fractured Congress. Party leaders agreed suggesting that it could be voted on early next year in the new Congress.

Landrieu had other ideas.

“I don’t think we necessarily need to wait until January,” she said Wednesday in a floor speech. Later, she secured an agreement from Democratic and Republican leaders to hold a vote authorizing the pipeline as early as next Tuesday.

House Republican leaders also announced plans to hold a vote as early as Thursday to authorize the pipeline, the ninth time the GOP-controlled House has voted to approve the pipeline in the past six years.

Before her remarks, Landrieu was spotted riding the escalator alone up from the Senate trains that carry lawmakers between their offices and the Capitol, toward a row of elevators. She was stone-faced and declined to answer questions from reporters. Once she reached the top level and stepped off, Sen. Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.), one of the Democratic Party’s most influential campaign strategists, spotted her and walked quickly in her direction.

Schumer, smiling, asked Landrieu to step aside for a private conversation. She shook her head and moved briskly toward the elevator. As she did, she pointed to her phone, saying she

had a call. Schumer paused for a moment as she moved away. His smile dropped, and he turned to follow her. “Mary, Mary,” he said, a few steps behind, asking her to speak with him. When she kept moving and ducked into an elevator, he hustled and jumped in to join her as the doors closed.

A few minutes later, Landrieu took to the Senate floor to vent her frustrations and to try to shift the political winds in her direction.

Robert Costa contributed to this report.

Ed O’Keefe is a congressional reporter with The Washington Post and covered the 2008 and 2012 presidential and congressional elections.
