

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

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REVIEW & OUTLOOK

The Keystone Contribution

The Senate has an open debate and, lo, it gets something done.

Feb. 1, 2015 6:25 p.m. ET

The change in Senate political management is already paying off, as shown by last week's strong bipartisan vote to approve the Keystone XL pipeline. As important as the final vote is that the Senate had a real policy debate for the first time in years.

The bill to approve the pipeline to carry Canadian and U.S. Bakken Shale crude to Gulf Coast refineries passed 62-36. Nine Democrats joined every present Republican to support a project that the State Department says would create as many as 42,000 direct and indirect jobs.

The bipartisan majority is all the more notable because former Majority Leader Harry Reid had refused even to allow a floor vote, as he did on most everything else when he ran the Senate. The Democrats who voted aye were: Michael Bennet (Colo.), Tom Carper (Del.), Bob Casey (Pa.), Joe Donnelly (Ind.), Heidi Heitkamp (N.D.), Joe Manchin (W.Va.), Claire McCaskill (Mo.), Jon Tester (Mont.) and Mark Warner (Va.).

New Majority Leader Mitch McConnell had promised to open the Senate to debate and a fair opportunity for individuals in both parties to offer amendments, and he proved it on Keystone by allowing votes on no fewer than 43 amendments. This is more amendment votes than the Senate had in all of 2014. Most of the Keystone amendments failed, and most deserved to, especially the Democratic attempts to lard the bill up with protectionism on steel and renewable energy mandates.

The bill will now go to a House-Senate conference, and presumably then to President Obama's desk. He's promising a veto, and the press corps thus wants to dismiss the Keystone debate as irrelevant. But the veto itself will be



A depot used to store pipes for Transcanada Corp's planned Keystone XL oil pipeline is seen in Gascoyne, North Dakota in this November 2014. *PHOTO: REUTERS*

educational—not least about how Mr. Obama defines “middle-class economics.”

The people who would build Keystone and benefit from its addition to world oil supply are average American workers and consumers. The most vociferous opponents of Keystone are wealthy liberals from San Francisco and New York who put the potential future risk from climate change above the current economic well-being of working people. One benefit of the Republican Senate is that it is finally making Mr. Obama show his real economic priorities, and they have little to do with the middle class.

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