

MEMO

To: Interested Parties
From: League of Conservation Voters
Re: Keystone Pipeline Politics in the 2012 Elections
Date: March 1, 2013

Some politicians are trying to make you believe that construction of the Keystone XL tar sands pipeline is a political winner even though it's an environmental loser. They're trying the same failed attacks that candidates, including Mitt Romney, deployed last cycle. But they're ignoring reality - not a single anti-Keystone XL candidate targeted with television ads on the pipeline lost in November despite the millions spent against them. On the contrary, President Obama was trusted more on energy issues and was reelected convincingly, while environmental champions running for the House and Senate also won big. Clearly, these attacks didn't resonate with the public.

In the last election cycle, Big Oil-backed candidates led by Mitt Romney spent millions advocating for the pipeline and urging the defeat of candidates who opposed it. In fact, Romney's first ad of the general election, "Day One", centered on his support for approving the Keystone XL pipeline on his first day in office. On the campaign trail Romney even absurdly claimed that if needed he would build the pipeline himself.

Oil-backed outside groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Americans for Prosperity, and Crossroads GPS spent millions more on attack ads trying to make construction of the pipeline a defining issue for voters. All told, more than \$10.8 million was spent on pro-Keystone XL ads for oil-backed candidates in at least 18 federal races:

	Races featuring Pro-Keystone Ads	Money Spent
House	9	\$1,133,680
Senate	8	\$6,111,020
President	1	\$3,587,700
Total:	18	\$10,832,400

But a funny thing happened on the way to the ballot box: these attacks fell flat. Voters preferred President Obama's energy policy to Mitt Romney's by 49%-41% in a Washington Post/ABC News poll and by 53%-40% in a USA Today/Gallup poll. The President also won the states where Romney made these pro-Keystone arguments most aggressively, winning Colorado by nearly 5 points and Nevada by 6 points.

Mitt Romney was the highest profile candidate to run on the Keystone XL pipeline and lose. But he wasn't the only one. In the open seat Senate race in New Mexico, oil-backed groups spent more than \$1.2 million attacking Martin Heinrich for his opposition to the Keystone XL pipeline. He went on to win by a fairly comfortable 5.6% margin. Florida Senator Bill Nelson's opponent also spent significant time and money attacking him over Keystone on the campaign trail. Nelson won by 13 points.

Some of Keystone XL's biggest backers lost big in November, including Romney, New Mexico Senate candidate Heather Wilson, Ohio Senate candidate Josh Mandel, Virginia Senate candidate George Allen, and Congressmen like Francisco Canseco of Texas, Ann Marie Buerkle of New York, Dan Lungren of California and Joe Walsh of Illinois.

Candidates backing the Keystone XL pipeline were ultimately defending a pipeline that would threaten the environment with far more global warming pollution than conventional crude oil and backing the oil industry, which remains one of the most unpopular industries in America. It's no wonder the pro-Keystone message failed with voters.

When it comes to the Keystone XL pipeline, the voters sent a clear message in November. Big Oil-backed members in the House and Senate may be trying the same old Keystone XL attacks, but they shouldn't be expecting a different result.