

### the pipeline: OPINIONS ON KEYSTONE XL



GLORIANA WOODLAKE '14

Last month, a friend of mine went to jail for protesting the Keystone XL pipeline. She was one of hundreds of students who demonstrated in front of the White House following the release of the State Department's environmental impact assessment. Granted, she was only in jail for an hour, but this impressed me and made me want to understand why she so passionately opposes the pipeline.

After doing some of my own research, however, I cannot say that I agree with her. According to the State Department's report, though the tar sands have a somewhat larger carbon footprint than other sources of oil, the pipeline is unlikely to affect the rate at which the oil is extracted—one way or another, it will find its way to market. Also, even if we could stop the extraction of that oil, it would only amount to "stopping the construction of somewhere between half a coal-fired power plant and half a dozen, at a time when China has been building dozens a year" (National Geographic).

While I have to laugh at some of the arguments that proponents of the pipeline have made, for instance that the U.S. would become energy independent or that a significant number of jobs would be created (the State Department estimates 42,000 temporary construction jobs and 50 permanent jobs), I don't know if I oppose the project. Railroads and shipping are, after all, more dangerous ways to transport oil than piping. I am still not sure where I fall on this issue, and though I admire my friend for her dedication, I can't help but wonder if it is misplaced.

law laws of  
the block

- IN SOUTH CAROLINA, A PERMIT MUST BE OBTAINED TO FIRE A MISSILE.
- IN ARIZONA, IT'S UNLAWFUL TO REFUSE A PERSON A GLASS OF WATER.

STEVAN LEI '16

So Keystone XL will be a giant boon to the US economy – the process of refining all that Canadian oil here at home will drive down gas prices and increase tax revenue in many states. But here's the thing: piping some 830,000 lucrative barrels a day from Alberta to the Gulf Coast through miles of North American wilderness and agriculture puts a person or two at risk, no matter how you slice it.

As a proud Boy Scout of America, I spent much of high school backpacking and poring over John Muir accounts of the American West in its heyday. However, we are slowly losing the ability to enjoy our national parks as we know them due to consumerism and development. The value of the preservation of nature's beauty is widely debated among environmentalists and politicians alike, and if Obama approves this decision we may start down a dark and slippery slope. Overall, it is not the pipeline that concerns me most – it is the precedent that would be set by allowing oil to rush past our heads while we sleep.

The idea that we may someday be drilling in North Dakota seems to me much less far-fetched following a decision like this. Our unique, rugged landscape is a huge part of what makes America the beautiful country it is. As beneficial as energy independence would be, the safety of our current farmland and preservation of our precious environment cannot be forgotten in the long run.