



Eminent domain fine and dandy for Keystone-obsessed GOP

By Jane Kleeb - 01/14/15 08:07 PM EST

Republicans have lost their way (“Key court approves Keystone’s route through Nebraska,” Jan. 9). It used to be that property rights were a conservative value, but when oil company interests are involved, apparently property rights mean nothing. You might expect Republicans to bend over backward to help farmers and ranchers prevent the taking of their land by a foreign corporation. But in the case of Keystone XL, those farmers and ranchers have been ignored and belittled as “fringe extremists.” The obsession over trying to take down President Obama has led the GOP down a path of hypocrisy.

After the famous *Kelo* eminent domain case in 2004, House Republicans passed a bill that made it clear “farmland owners need to have long-term certainty regarding their property rights in order to make the investment decisions to commit land to these uses.” The bill went on to say, “the use of eminent domain to take farmland and other rural property for economic development threatens liberty, rural economies, and the economy of the United States.”

Placing a high-risk, high-pressure, maximum-capacity pipeline that has tar sands and chemicals like benzene is anything but adding “certainty” to a farmer. Helping expand tar sands adds to carbon pollution, which leads to climate change — also something not on the “good” list for farmers’ livelihoods and rural economies.

Republicans and Democrats have turned their backs on farmers and ranchers, all so they can show up at the next Big Oil event with their hand out.

TransCanada’s one-sided, often forced, contracts tell landowners they should, at the property owner’s expense, take out liability insurance because economic damages to land and water are not covered under any federal law when a spill happens. On top of that, TransCanada leaves the pipeline in the ground for the landowner to dig up and restore the soil once TransCanada is finished using that massive piece of foreign steel. Again, at the landowners’ risk and the landowners’ expense.

Republicans have fancy floor posters they bring to Congress showing mythical job numbers. Where are the posters of 80-year landowners being harassed by endless phone calls and uninvited visits from TransCanada land agents? Where is the poster talking about how eminent domain to take farmland away is all of the sudden fine and dandy?

Obama has the Heartland running through his veins. Turning his back on farmers, ranchers and tribal communities was and is never an option. We stand with the president to protect our property rights and to protect our water for our kids and the livelihoods that put food on Americans’ tables every single day.

The six-year fight is simple: If you support Keystone XL, you support eminent domain for private gain. Folks in the Heartland will never forget that Republicans willingly putting our water, climate and property rights at-risk all to help one foreign tar sands corporation.

Hastings, Neb.