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## **NY Nurses say President Obama must reject Keystone Pipeline due to its impact on emissions levels and Public Health**

**NEW YORK** — Nurses care for patients every day who struggle with health crises aggravated by environmental pollution. Fossil fuel use and climate change are making people sick and endangering the future for our children. That is why the New York State Nurses Association opposes the Keystone XL pipeline.

We were encouraged by President Obama's speech at Georgetown University on June 25, which drew attention to the historic challenge of climate change and the devastating consequences we will face if we fail to act soon.

President Obama specifically referenced the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline, stating: "Allowing the Keystone pipeline to be built requires a finding that doing so would be in our nation's interest. And our national interest will be served only if this project does not significantly exacerbate the problem of carbon pollution. The net effects of the pipeline's impact on our climate will be absolutely critical to determining whether this project is allowed to go forward."

We, the nurses and other healthcare workers and advocates for patients in our care, want to clearly articulate the facts as they stand. The verdict is in — the Keystone XL pipeline will irrevocably escalate carbon emissions and cause irreversible damage to our health, agriculture, and current way of life.

A project that accelerates the use of tar sands oil from Alberta, and brings this extremely dirty and toxic fuel into the global energy system, can lead to only one outcome: considerably more carbon emissions in the extraction, transportation, refining and export of this fuel.

As nurses, we saw the terrible impact of Superstorm Sandy first-hand. We were on the frontline of disaster relief – in our hospitals and in communities damaged by the storm, including the Rockaways, Red Hook, Coney Island, and Staten Island. Sandy exposed dangerous gaps in our healthcare system – the result of years of cuts. We met people stuck in their homes without their medication, their nebulizers, or access to basic medical care.

If we don't take action to stop climate change now, we are going to see more storms like Sandy, and more tornadoes like the deadly ones in Oklahoma. And climate change will continue to have a devastating impact on our patients and our practice.

We were encouraged when, in the last State of the Union address, President Obama said, "...the 12 hottest years on record have all come in the last 15. Heat waves, droughts, wildfires, and floods – all are now more frequent and intense. We can choose to believe that Superstorm Sandy, and the most severe drought in decades, and the worst wildfires some states have ever seen were all just a freak coincidence. Or we can choose to believe in the overwhelming judgment of science – and act before it's too late."

NYSNA believes that the 'judgment of science,' and pure common sense, must lead to a rejection of Keystone XL and similar projects that lock in our use and dependence on fossil fuels. We also note the EPA's own concerns, released on April 22, 2013, regarding the full impact of the Keystone project. We do not accept the oil industry's argument that tar sands oil will promote 'energy independence.' If constructed, Keystone XL will be an export pipeline - a pipeline not to America, but through America.

NYSNA is also concerned about the public health implications of increasing the exploitation of the Alberta tar sands. The unrestrained expansion of the Alberta tar sands extraction would have a devastating impact on our climate. We therefore urge President Obama not to approve the Keystone XL pipeline.

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The **New York State Nurses Association** is the voice for over a hundred thousand frontline nurses. We are New York's largest union and professional association for registered nurses.

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