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JANUARY 24, 2017

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PRESIDENT BEGAYE AND VICE PRESIDENT NEZ OPPOSE SIGNING OF PRESIDENTIAL MEMORANDUMS FURTHERING CONSTRUCTION OF DAPL

Today President Donald J. Trump signed Presidential memorandums to advance approval of both the Keystone XL and Dakota Access oil pipelines. The construction of both pipelines have been heavily disputed by Native American tribes.

Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez strongly oppose President Donald Trump's signing of his Presidential memorandum to advance approval of the Keystone and the Dakota Access Pipelines.

Both President Begaye and Vice President Nez had traveled to Cannonball, N.D., last year to speak with Standing Rock Sioux Chairman Dave Archambault II and show their support for the tribe's opposition to the construction of the pipeline.

The construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline threatens to contaminate a major source of water for the tribe and surrounding communities as well as to destroy sacred, tribal lands.

"If an oil spill happens, it will not only impact Indian Country but it will impact millions of people who utilize the water for livestock, farming, and recreation," President Begaye said. "We hope President Trump understands that Native Americans will always stand to protect our land, water, air and resources given to us by our Creator."

President Begaye is calling upon all Native Americans to be diligent in standing together, as tribal nations will encounter more of these actions in the next four years.

"We encourage our people to refrain from violence as the construction moves forward. Lets unite in prayer and hope that the industry itself will seek alternate solutions," he said.

"The Trump Administration needs to recognize how valuable all natural resources are, especially water. Water gives us life and sustenance. We cannot live without water," said President Begaye.

The decision to sign these Presidential memorandums furthering the construction of these pipelines, only five days into Trump's Administration, should concern all Native American tribes as well as states and communities along the pipeline's trajectory, said Vice President Nez.

"In essence, President Trump is setting the tone for his administration," Vice President Nez said. "If this is what we as Native nations have to look forward to then we need to stand together in protecting our lands and natural sources from any further mismanagement or environmental disasters."

Regarding the construction of the Keystone Pipeline, President Trump said, "It's something that has been in dispute and is subject to a renegotiation of terms by us."

"We are going to renegotiate some of the terms and we'll see if we can get that pipeline built," President Trump said during the signing.

President Trump said that with respect to the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, the terms and conditions will be negotiated by his administration.

President Begaye and Vice President Nez said there are other ways to create jobs and increase economic growth for the United States like the utilization of alternative sources of energy.

"These pipelines will create temporary construction jobs but only a fraction will amount to permanent jobs in the future," President Begaye said.

The Office of the President and Vice President express their appreciation to all Native American Leaders across the United States and abroad and the Dakota Sioux Nation for standing up to protect our most precious resource, which is our water.

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