

Terminal philosophy Presidential campaigns state positions on LNG, pipelines

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Six months ago, opponents of proposed natural gas projects were looking everywhere for help, and openly questioning whether their elected officials cared to support them.

How quickly things change.

In January, Oregon Secretary of State Bill Bradbury and at least three candidates for statewide offices were the first significant public figures to take stands against the LNG projects. Shortly after that, Gov. Ted Kulongoski and Oregon's Congressional delegation began lobbying for more state control in the project placement process.

And in the last two weeks, the two Democratic candidates for president have addressed liquefied natural gas, first with Illinois Sen. Barack Obama commenting on gas projects to the editorial board of the Medford Mail-Tribune, then with New York Sen. Hillary Clinton making it a key part of her speech in Hillsboro last week.

Joining her on the stage was Anne Berblinger, owner of the organic Gales Meadow Farm in Gales Creek and one of the foremost gas pipeline opponents (see sidebar).

Several issues make the topic of liquefied natural gas a complicated matter.

Some question whether America should be increasing its reliance on liquefied natural gas, which is shipped on tankers from foreign countries. Some of those countries have ongoing diplomatic and ideological disputes with the United States.

Others wonder where America will get its energy from if natural gas isn't imported.

There's no conclusive answer as to how safe the gas is to transport on tankers, and to move inland on pipelines as compressed gas (the pipelines proposed for Oregon do not carry liquefied natural gas).

And here in Washington County, the federal policy of granting eminent domain rights to developers of approved pipelines is perhaps the most controversial aspect of the proposals. Landowners who are opposed to the pipelines have no way of stopping the projects once they are approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

Members of the commission are appointed by the president, and at least three will be appointed by the next president.

With this in mind, the Argus began asking presidential campaigns for information about their candidates' stance on these topics in December. A second request was sent to campaigns in February.

Once it became clear that Oregonians' votes would matter in this year's presidential primaries, the campaigns responded to a series of questions sent via e-mail. All of the campaigns were asked the same questions, although all three campaigns responded in different ways.

Here are their responses.