American Petroleum Institute presents
Oil: An urban conversation with WVON’s Cliff Kelley

Series of pro-con panels at Chicago State University debate the role of oil production and jobs vs. environmental concerns

April 26, 2012 — The American Petroleum Institute is taking the debate over America’s oil and natural gas industry to the people Friday at Chicago State University. Radio personality Cliff Kelley of WVON 1690 AM moderates this event that will air live from 9 a.m. till noon.

“The petroleum and natural gas industry for the first time is beginning a dialogue with the community,” says David Sykuta, executive director of the Illinois Petroleum Council. “The good news is the growth of the industry in North America is such that we will realize hundreds of thousands of jobs for hard-working families, most of which will pay family wages.”

Those jobs, according to API, will come if and when the Keystone XL pipeline obtains federal approval to expand from Montana to Texas. President Obama previously thwarted efforts to extend the pipeline due to environmental concerns in Nebraska. This week, however, the oil and gas industry renewed efforts to get the expansion approved by presenting an alternative plan addressing those concerns.

In Illinois, Sykuta says, jobs will be created in Chicago and Peoria because companies such as Caterpillar and John Deere manufacture the trucks required by the Canadian oil industry, a key supplier of oil to the United States. Skilled tradespeople, accustomed to following jobs, will be able to move to Montana and the Dakotas to provide their pipefitting know-how to pipeline construction, he says. The pipeline is expected to generate 20,000 new U.S. jobs.

Chicago State President Wayne D. Watson says he welcomes a robust debate about the role of oil in supporting the American lifestyle, the jobs the industry provides and how to be environmentally responsible in the process. The event is also an opportunity to make students aware of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) careers related to the petroleum and natural gas industry.

“There’s a lot of debate about the environmental impact of oil, so we respect a diversity of viewpoints,” Watson says. “We are also cognizant that petroleum manufacturers have invested a great deal of money in making products more environmentally friendly. There’s more to be done.”

**Panelists:** David Sykuta, Illinois Petroleum Council; Denise Hamsher, Enbridge Energy and Pipeline Corp.; Jonathan Jackson, CSU business professor; John Marshall, senior aide to Rep. Bobby Rush; Harrison Mayley and John Leen, Local Union 597 Pipe Fitters; Patrick Healey, Chicago Laborers’ District Council; Dr. Asare Nkansah, CSU chemistry professor; and Dr. Ali Manesh, president, American Science & Technology.

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