

# Keystone XL Scandal: Obama Attorney's Law Firm Represents TransCanada's Pipeline in Alaska

By [Steve Horn](#)

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A DeSmogBlog investigation reveals that [Robert Bauer](#), former White House Counsel and President Barack Obama's personal attorney, works at the corporate law firm [Perkins Coie LLP](#), which does legal work for TransCanada's [South Central LNG Project](#), formerly known as [Alaska Gas Pipeline Project](#).

Furthermore, [Dan Sullivan](#), current Commissioner of Alaska's Department of Natural Resources, and former Alaska Attorney General and former Assistant Secretary of State in the Bush Administration, is a former Perkins attorney.

These findings come in the immediate aftermath of a recent investigation revealing the contractor hired by Obama's U.S. State Department to do the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the northern half of TransCanada's [Keystone XL tar sands export pipeline](#) – Environmental Resources Management, Inc. (ERM Group) – [lied on its June 2012 conflict-of interest filing](#). ERM Group checked the box on the form saying it had [no current business ties to TransCanada](#).

In fact, [ERM – a member of the American Petroleum Institute \(API\)](#), which has [spent over \\$22 million lobbying on tar sands and Keystone XL](#) since 2008 – does maintain business ties to TransCanada, the investigation revealed. This includes an ongoing consulting relationship with South Central LNG, co-owned by TransCanada, ExxonMobil, BP and ConocoPhillips.

Under 18 USC § 1001, making a “materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement or representation...[to the] executive, legislative, or judicial branch of the Government of the United States” is a [crime punishable by up to five years in jail](#).

On top of his job at Perkins Coie, Bauer – a well-known architect of [bending campaign finance law to allow more corporate money](#) to flood into electoral races – served as general counsel to President Obama's 2012 reelection campaign. He also serves as general counsel to the Democratic National Committee and did electoral law work for John Kerry's 2004 presidential campaign.

His wife, [Anita Dunn](#) is the co-owner of SDKnickerbocker, former Obama Communications Director, senior advisor for Obama's 2012 re-election campaign and is the former communications director for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee under then-Senator Kerry. She's [met with top Obama administration officials more than 100 times](#) since leaving in 2009, according to a recent New York Times investigation.

Dunn currently does public relations work on behalf of TransCanada and freight rail industry [lobbying group, American Association of Railroads \(AAR\)](#). The [tar sands pipeline](#)

[boom](#) comes alongside a [freight rail boom to carry tar sands](#) crude and [fracked oil from North Dakota's Bakken Shale](#).



“ERM lied on its conflict of interest disclosure form, and State was either asleep at the wheel or chose to look the other way,” FOE’s Ross Hammond [told The Washington Post in a recent piece](#) commenting on ERM’s “[Pinocchio moment](#).”

Given the myriad ties that bind, “looking the other way” appears more plausible.

#### Perkins Coie’s Legal Bidding for Democrats, TransCanada AK Gas Pipeline Project

Perkins Coie is a global firm with 19 offices worldwide and maintains close ties to the Democratic Party above and beyond Bob Bauer.

Bauer’s colleague Mark Ellis, for example, does legal work on behalf of the “Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, the Democratic Governors Associations and numerous U.S. senators and representatives and their campaigns,” [according to his Perkins Coie biography](#).

The [Oil and Gas legal work](#) portion of Perkins’ website highlights its legal work in Alaska.

“In Alaska, our lawyers have long represented leading oil and gas companies on the North Slope and the Cook Inlet...We are extensively involved in efforts to develop the Point Thomson field and commercialize Alaska’s natural gas resources with a pipeline to Lower 48 markets.”

The “efforts to...commercialize Alaska’s natural gas resources with a pipeline to Lower 48 markets” that Perkins’ website refers to is the South Central LNG Project co-owned by TransCanada.

A [map on the original Alaska Gas Pipeline Project](#) website depicts the route:



“The project is designed to connect Alaska’s North Slope natural gas resources to new markets and deliver a reliable and secure source of clean burning energy for decades to come,” [explain TransCanada and ExxonMobil](#) on the original Alaska Gas Pipeline Project website. “TransCanada and ExxonMobil have the expertise, experience, and financial capability to develop what would be one of the largest privately funded energy projects in the history of North America.”

Before providing legal aide to South Central LNG, Perkins helped the [Trans-Alaska Pipeline](#)

[System \(TAPS\)](#) – co-owned by Koch Industries, ExxonMobil, BP, ConocoPhillips and Chevron and often referred to as the [Alyeska Pipeline](#) – get up and running. TAPS takes oil from the Alaska North Slope to the Valdez Marine Terminal, [home of the Exxon Valdez spill](#).

Perkins' legal aide, in fact, [made TAPS a reality](#) according to an interview appearing online with [Perkins' veteran attorney Guy Martin](#). Martin was instrumental in opening Perkins' office focusing on Alaska in Washington DC.

"I actually took a little, first-floor townhouse on Capitol Hill, and opened what was really a two- or three-person office. It was the first state office, and we worked pretty much exclusively on the pipeline," [said Martin](#). "The Trans-Alaska Pipeline Act was passed as the direct result of the passing of the Settlement Act."

Perkins Coie attorney [L. John Iani](#) – former [Region 10 \(which includes Alaska\) Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#) administrator from 2001-2004 under President George W. Bush – also formerly [lobbied for](#) the Alaska Gas Pipeline Project [working for TransCanada](#) from 2005-2008, [Congressional lobbying disclosure records show](#). He did so [while working for Van Ness Feldman](#) from 2004-2010, a firm that [today lobbies on behalf of TransCanada's Keystone XL](#).

Perkins still does legal work on behalf of TAPS and defended it in the 2010 case [Alyeska Pipeline Service Company v. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration](#).

#### AK DNR Run by Former Perkins Attorney

Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Commissioner [Dan Sullivan](#) formerly worked at Perkins Coie from 1996-2006.

His task as head of Alaska's DNR, by law, is to serve as an oil and gas industry watchdog. As such, he will aid in overseeing whether South Central LNG becomes a reality. Sullivan – it's important to remember – was [named Attorney General by former Alaska Republican Gov. Sarah Palin](#) of "[drill baby, drill](#)" fame in June 2009.

Prior to his appointment as Attorney General, [Dan Sullivan served as Assistant Secretary of State](#) during the Bush administration, reporting to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Sullivan's full title was Assistant Secretary for Economic, Energy and Business Affairs. Wikileaks diplomatic cables reveal that while at the State Department, Sullivan helped negotiate oil and gas deals with [Kazakhstan](#), [Azerbaijan](#), [Turkey](#), [Norway](#), the [United Arab Emirates](#), [Pakistan](#), [Turkmenistan](#) and [France](#).

It was also under Bush and during Sullivan's time at the State Department that the [original TransCanada Keystone tar sands pipeline was approved](#) in March 2008. Three months later, in June 2008, TransCanada [proposed Keystone XL](#) to the State Department.

In March 2012, President Obama issued an [Executive Order to expedite the building of Keystone XL's southern half](#) from Cushing, OK to Port Arthur, TX. It is the northern, border-crossing half whose final destiny is now in the hands of President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry.

"Americans Know a Rat When They Smell One"

Anita Dunn will likely be working overtime in the coming weeks and months [using her](#)

[insider/outsider status](#) to ensure its approval on behalf of the client she shares with her husband Bob Bauer's law firm, TransCanada.

"Only in the ethically-challenged world of K Street lobbyists could it be considered OK for a power couple like Dunn & Bauer to exploit their White House connections to promote the interests of a foreign corporation like TransCanada," Hammond told DeSmogBlog in an interview.

"Beltway insiders may yawn at the fact that TransCanada has hired people so close to President Obama and Secretary Kerry to push their dirty and dangerous pipeline, but ordinary Americans know a rat when they smell one."

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