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The Twice Daily Source For News and Analysis on Congress**ENERGY****Falling Oil Prices
Fuels New Debate
Over Offshore
Drilling***Mon. Aug 11, 2008
by Terry Kivlan*

Environmental groups are hoping the recent drop in oil prices will ease the pressure for opening up the outer-continental shelf to drilling.

"Maybe it will encourage people to reflect on what we really should be doing," said Virginia Sierra Club Director Glen Besa today, referring to conservation and renewable fuel initiatives. "What has gotten ignored in this debate is the looming of global warming and the need to end our dependence on fossil fuels."

Oil, meanwhile, dipped 27 cents to \$115.20 a barrel this morning despite concerns that the conflict between Russia and Georgia might disrupt supply shipments from the region.

But Jim Kibler, a government relations vice president for AGL Resources, parent company of Virginia Natural Gas, argued that the continued price decline was due at least in part to the fact that "Congress having a good hard discussion" about lifting the three-decade-old ban on drilling in the OCS, he said.

In any case, suggested Kibler, oil prices are likely to remain at historically high levels. "I don't know anyone who thinks we are going to see \$60-a-barrel oil again," he said.

Besa and Kibler were scheduled to take part in a forum on offshore drilling this evening in Norfolk, Va., sponsored by Rep. **Bobby Scott**, D-Va. Also due to participate was Democratic State Del. Joe Bouchard of Virginia.

Scott, who has opposed the elimination of the ban, said in a statement that the voters "deserve an open honest discussion on how offshore drilling will impact both their wallets and the coastlines. I believe it is vitally important that we hear from experts on this issue."

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