



Bachmann: Laying out a strategy for America's energy

BY MICHELE BACHMANN

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America is in the grip of a true energy crisis.

Right now, it's a soccer mom who can't fill the tank of her minivan, the corner grocer who has to raise prices on his stock, and the trucker struggling to make ends meet. Soon it will be a family choosing between a high heating bill and Christmas gifts for the kids.

Energy independence is not a nice goal, but a national necessity. Until we are energy independent, neither our economy nor our country will be truly secure. So the question is: how does America finally become energy independent?

This answer is not oil shale OR offshore drilling OR nuclear power. The answer is not clean coal OR wind farms OR solar panels. And it is not hydrogen cars OR alternative fuels OR more conservation.

The answer is: All of the above.

With Americans hurting and our security in peril, we cannot afford to leave any option off the table. We must open and develop every American energy resource - ridding ourselves once and for all of our dependence on foreign oil.

But sadly, Democrat leaders have refused to get behind this energetic, all-of-the-above approach. Indeed, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has put great effort into blocking a vote on this plan because, by definition, a comprehensive approach must include drilling for America's vast oil and gas reserves - such as those in the Outer Continental Shelf.

These distant, deepwater reserves contain over 88 billion barrels of oil and 420 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. A recent Department of the Interior analysis estimated that the energy that could be harvested from these reserves would be the equivalent of 30 years of imports from Saudi Arabia. And America has enough clean natural gas - if made legal to explore - to heat 60 million homes for 160 years. But it's off limits.

Fortunately, on Oct. 1, the almost 30-year congressional moratorium on offshore drilling will expire and Americans will finally have access to these amazing resources. Unfortunately, Speaker Pelosi and the Democrat leadership are trying to keep that moratorium in place. In fact, under the recent proposal they passed in the House, nine-tenths of all offshore reserves, including some of the most promising areas for exploration, will remain under lock and key.

Right now - thanks to Congressional interference - only 3 percent of this huge reserve has been leased for exploration. And instead of increasing that number, the Democrat plan creates a new series of bans and roadblocks. In other words: business as usual.

The Democrat plan even fails to include revenue sharing for coastal states with offshore leases. Failure to include this commonsense, bipartisan provision is proof-positive that the House Democrats are just playing games. Even Democrat Senator Mary Landrieu of Louisiana says that the House bill "certainly won't see the light of day in the Senate."

The Democrat bill is all about political cover; it's not about making a difference in real people's lives.

Americans can't afford business as usual. The people of this country are hurting. Our security is threatened. We can't leave any energy option off the table - especially one as promising as offshore drilling. Congress needs to immediately pass a full throttle, all-of-the-above American energy plan that vastly increases production of every American resource, blazes a bold new frontier of renewable energy, and encourages responsible conservation. It's not just the best energy strategy for America - it's the only one.

Republican Michele Bachmann represents the Stillwater area in the U.S. House of Representatives. She is running against El Tinklenberg for the 6th Congressional District seat this fall.

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651-439-3130 stwgztte@acnpapers.com

