



In Case You Missed It

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN DOC HASTINGS

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The Times-Picayune

[Getting the Gulf Coast back to work](#)

April 2, 2011

The Times-Picayune Op-Ed

By Rep. Doc Hastings

As gasoline prices continue to surge towards \$4 a gallon and unemployment lingers near 9 percent, Americans are seeing the consequences of the Obama administration's policies that have prevented access to our own American energy sources.

Despite President Obama's talk of increasing American oil production, his rhetoric does not match his actions. At almost every opportunity, the administration has gone out of its way to block access to more American-made energy. From the de facto moratorium in the Gulf of Mexico to canceled onshore lease sales, the administration continues to undermine domestic production by keeping our resources under lock and key.

Among those hit hardest by these policies are the people of the Gulf Coast, whose economy depends on the offshore drilling industry. A study by Dr. Joseph Mason of Louisiana State University predicts that if the de facto ban on deepwater drilling were sustained for 18 months, there could be a loss of 36,137 jobs nationwide, with 24,532 jobs lost in the Gulf Coast region alone.

The administration's de facto moratorium has caused production to decline by more than 200,000 barrels of oil per day and is forcing companies to leave the Gulf to drill in foreign water off the coasts of Africa and Brazil.

While I'm pleased the administration has finally started issuing deepwater permits, they are at a slow pace. House Republicans believe the Obama administration is taking our country in the wrong direction when it comes to developing American-made energy. In a recent poll, 66 percent of Americans said the administration should be doing more to encourage offshore American oil and natural gas exploration.

Even former President Bill Clinton called the delays in issuing offshore drilling permits "ridiculous." Yet, despite overwhelming public support for expanded production, the administration continues to take steps to slow down or block American-made energy.

In contrast to the administration's actions, Republicans have launched the American Energy Initiative. This effort will focus on expanding production of all types of energy in

order to create jobs and meet our needs -- stopping, and reversing, the administration policies that are driving up prices. As part of this initiative, the Natural Resources Committee is focused on harnessing American energy resources offshore and on federal lands.

This week, as a first step in this process, I introduced three pieces of legislation aimed at putting the Gulf Coast back to work, restarting offshore leasing now and reversing the Obama administration's effective moratorium on new offshore drilling.

The first bill, the Putting the Gulf Back to Work Act, will end the administration's de facto moratorium in a safe, responsible and transparent manner by limiting their ability to block offshore drilling and impose endless bureaucratic delays during the permitting process. It sets firm time-limits for considering permits to drill in order to provide certainty and allow businesses get back to work. This will have an immediate impact on both job creation and energy production.

Next, the Restarting American Offshore Leasing Now Act will expand U.S. energy production and create jobs by requiring the Secretary of the Interior to conduct oil and natural gas lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico and offshore Virginia that have been delayed or canceled by the administration. Due to the administration's actions, 2011 will be the first year since 1958 that an offshore lease sale will not be held.

Lastly, the Reversing President Obama's Offshore Moratorium Act will lift the president's ban on new offshore drilling by requiring the administration to move forward with the 2012-17 plan for areas containing the most oil and natural gas resources. In contrast to the president's drill-nowhere-new plan, this is a drill-smart plan.

The Natural Resources Committee will act aggressively to advance these bills. In April, the committee will travel to the Gulf Coast to hold a field hearing so we can hear directly from those affected by these policies.

Finally, over the next several weeks and months, my fellow Republicans and I will continue to advance additional legislation. These bills will focus on onshore energy production, renewable energy production, hydropower, coal and critical minerals that are vital to renewable energy and new technology.

It is foolish for the United States to continue importing millions of barrels of oil a day instead of using our own resources. We must unlock our American energy resources to decrease our dependence on foreign energy, create jobs, lower gasoline prices and protect our national security.

U.S. Rep. Doc Hastings, a Republican from the state of Washington, is chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee.

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House Natural Resources Committee Press Office
Contact: [Jill Strait](#), [Spencer Pederson](#) or [Crystal Feldman](#)
202-226-9019

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