



[Obama's new offshore policy full of rhetoric but short on drilling](#)

By Rep. Doc Hastings
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In an effort to appear supportive of the “drill here, drill now” chants that dogged him during his 2008 campaign, President Obama, along with Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, has announced his administration’s new plan for Outer Continental Shelf energy exploration.

Speaking of the “need to harness traditional sources of fuel”, the president extolled the virtues of an “expansion of offshore oil and gas exploration.” Listening to the president speak, it was hard to believe this is the same administration that has delayed the implementation of President George W. Bush’s 2010-2015 OCS leasing plan that would have allowed access to 500 million acres of new offshore oil and gas production.

What most didn’t realize was that Obama had just played a clever and well calculated trick—the offshore drilling plan that he announced actually locks up significantly more of the OCS than it makes available for energy production. This move actually reverses the actions taken by Congress and President Bush in 2008 to lift the OCS moratoria.

The new “Obama Moratorium” explicitly locks up over 360 million acres, or 60 percent, of the OCS in the lower 48 for energy production. This in total amounts to 13.14 billion barrels of oil and 41.49 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. The president claimed to have opened up areas off the coast of Virginia, the Eastern Seaboard, Alaska and in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico, but in reality he is just taking credit for something others before him accomplished.

Shockingly, the only two small areas of the OCS that were guaranteed a lease sale by Obama, Virginia and Cook Inlet - both of which were already supposed to take place in 2011 - have been delayed to 2012 after Wednesday’s announcement.

Obama said his administration will only study the Mid-Atlantic, Southern Atlantic, Chukchi and Beaufort Sea areas—the latter two have already undergone extensive studies—but did not actually make a commitment to offer lease sales for these areas. There is no guarantee that drilling will ever happen in these areas.

Finally, the area off the Eastern Gulf of Mexico is only open if Congress lifts a ban that is in place until 2022, which isn’t likely with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi at the helm.

In the end, the real result of the president’s announcement was that he either canceled or put in doubt 22 planned or proposed lease sales included in the current or draft OCS 5-year plans. These lease sales would have raised billions in new revenue for the Treasury and

their exploration and development could have generated domestic energy and tens of thousands of new jobs.

The American people know the added benefit of nearly 18 billion barrels of oil and 77 trillion cubic feet of natural gas has real life implications—that's why 72% of Americans support new offshore drilling.

We are not living in an economy where we can afford to turn job creation aside for political gain—that said, according to a recent study by the American Energy Alliance, opening the OCS will create 1.2 million jobs annually across the country and increase the GDP by \$8 trillion. By the time you account for all the jobs created and additional tax revenues, the savings on energy prices are just icing on the cake.

At the end of the day, Obama got to appear to be on the right side of a populist issue with a well-received press release garnering some good headlines, even from his toughest critics, all while trying to grease the wheels in the U.S. Senate for an upcoming vote on a job-killing national energy tax.

Unfortunately, the American public was left holding the bag—full of higher energy prices, less domestic energy production, more reliant on foreign sources of energy, and fewer American jobs.

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