

U.S. ENERGY POLICY: AMERICANS DEMAND ACTION
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Gas prices have risen again this summer and citizens are concerned. The federal government must develop policies that eliminate our dependence on foreign oil. Energy, the lifeblood of our national security, transportation, and commerce should not be potentially undercut by oil-rich nations led by officials who maintain an unhealthy relationship with Islamic terrorists in the Middle East or by the erratic tendencies of rogue despots like Hugo Chavez of Venezuela.

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Senator Harry Reid have provided no leadership on the energy issue. They have offered proposals that ban oil drilling within 50 miles of the U.S. coast. They propose no incentives to the states to support drilling from a revenue standpoint. And the Democrats have turned their collective backs on some of the most promising alternatives such as nuclear energy.

A recent Rasmussen Report poll found that 69% of voters support offshore drilling.

Natural gas and oil exploration have been prohibited in all offshore regions except most of the central and western portions of the Gulf of Mexico. But due to Republican pressure fueled by citizen demand for action, the Congress finally passed a spending bill with a provision that ends the 26 year old off-shore drilling prohibition.

Early laws and regulations established federal, state, and international jurisdiction for offshore sites. In 1953, federal officials established that coastal states hold the rights to any natural resources within 3 nautical miles of their coastline. The Federal government holds jurisdiction outside of this boundary. International boundaries were established in 1983 by proclamation thus setting the claimed rights for the United States to waters up to 200 nautical miles from the coastline. (The Outer Continental Shelf)

New estimates conclude that over 45 billion barrels of oil can be produced from areas that have been off limits. Improved technology has thwarted the fears of some environmentalists about oil spills. Rig platforms use sophisticated high-pressure valves that close automatically to prevent oil spills. Automatic fail-safe devices are standard features in wells below sea level. In regions that have permitted drilling, documentation has shown that only 1 barrel of oil was spilled per 156,900 barrels produced. The spills have been quickly contained and aquatic life has not been endangered. In fact, natural seeps of oil from the surface of the ocean account for about 65% of the oil in the waters.

Most new oil rigs will be 12-18 miles from the shore. Because of the curvature of the Earth, people who are concerned that the visual beauty of the shorelines will be compromised on their summer trips to the beach should relax. It won't be an issue. The rigs will not be visible.

The oil currently produced in U.S. waters is scrutinized much more stringently than foreign production so environmentalists, known for their 'world' view on life, should be satisfied that overall environmental responsibility will be stronger if we aggressively pursue oil production in U.S. regions and decrease imports.

In fact, American Petroleum Institute President Red Cavaney recently stated, "I think that what we have proved through four incredible hurricanes in the last three years is that we have the environmental sensitivity and are willing to put the money into

making sure that these platforms can take the hardest that mother nature can give them and still not end up discharging any production-related oil into the sea.”

Canada has a very productive crude oil and petroleum system in place. Nova Scotia is a prime location for drilling by Canada – in close proximity to United States waters. It’s time that the U.S. captures its fair share of oil off its own coastlines.

T. Boone Pickens, founder and chairman of BP Capital Management, is pushing a plan that envisions building new wind generator facilities that will produce 20% of the United States’ electricity and allow the implementation of natural gas as a transportation fuel. Pickens believes that within 10 years we can replace more than one-third of our foreign oil imports with the resources produced by this approach.

Alternative domestic energy sources should be explored as well. The federal government is considering opening 2 million acres of public land in Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado to commercial oil shale development. The shale is believed to contain 80 billion barrels of recoverable oil. The technology to produce the oil is still experimental but within 8 to 10 years, it should be a viable option.

Republicans are justifiably concerned about the unstable nature of relying on Middle East countries such as Saudi Arabia for oil. The subversive influence of terrorist groups on our oil suppliers is enough to make us toss and turn at night. If terrorist and other enemies gain a stranglehold on oil production then America’s security and commerce could be crippled.

I believe that the rugged individualist nature of the American people, which is best represented by Republican principles, is in the process of prevailing in the debate over future U.S. energy policy. Let’s all remain vigilant and be engaged in this public policy discussion.