



June 28, 2006

Dear Representative:

We urge you to protect our beaches and environmentally sensitive coastal areas by opposing H.R. 4761, the “Deep Ocean Energy Resources (DOER) Act.” The bill would rescind the 25-year bipartisan moratorium against offshore drilling that protects beaches and sensitive coastal areas on the Atlantic, Eastern Gulf, and Pacific Coasts.

More than 100 million Americans visit our ocean beaches every year. Drilling off our beaches would mean toxic air and water pollution, tar balls and oil spill threats on a daily basis, threatening multi-billion dollar tourism industries and endanger environmentally sensitive coastal areas. The headlong rush to lift a quarter-century old Congressional ban on oil and gas exploration belies the reality that the oil and gas industry already has access to more than 40 million acres of offshore leases, with fewer than 7 million of those acres in production.

If the DOER bill is enacted, the moratorium for areas 100 miles or more offshore would be permanently eliminated. States would have to go through a cumbersome process every 5 years to reinstate the moratorium for areas between 50 and 100 miles. Areas under 50 miles from shore would still be protected, but adjacent states could decide to “opt out” of this protection. In exchange, they would receive a percentage of the royalties the oil and gas industry pays the U.S. government for the privilege of drilling. In other words, oil and gas companies could begin to bribe states to lift their drilling ban with the promise of some quick cash in the form of royalties, leading to a slippery slope that could put pressure on other coastal states to follow suit.

The DOER bill would also bust the federal budget. The Minerals Management Service (MMS) estimates that the bill would “result in the decline of \$69 billion of retained federal royalties over 15 years.” The bill cuts royalties received from leases in shallow waters, giving the oil and gas industry more royalty relief at a time when it is making record profits.

There are faster, cheaper and cleaner energy alternatives than drilling. The U.S. could save 234 trillion cubic feet (TCF) of natural gas if aggressive policies and programs utilizing off-the-shelf energy efficiency technologies were implemented. These savings are almost three times greater than the amount of gas MMS estimates is technically recoverable in protected offshore areas (about 86 TCF). A combination of energy efficiency and renewable energy policies would save 6.9 TCF of gas by 2013, which is far more gas than could be obtained from protected offshore areas by that date.

We should pursue clean energy alternatives instead of harming our nation’s beaches and environmentally sensitive coastal areas by lifting the offshore drilling moratorium. Please protect our coasts by opposing the DOER bill.

Sincerely,

Karen Wayland, Legislative Director