

Reject BP Oil Disaster Amnesia Bills: H.R. 1229, H.R. 1230, and H.R. 1231

One year ago, the *Deepwater Horizon* exploded, killing 11 workers, spilling 170 million gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico, and wreaking havoc on the environment. However, rather than seeking to prevent future disasters, H.R. 1229, 1230, and 1231 accelerate the very processes that the President's National Oil Spill Commission found led to the BP disaster. The three drill-at-all-cost bills would actually weaken the system for overseeing oil drilling that was in effect *before* the *Deepwater Horizon* disaster, and mandate new drilling in sensitive ocean areas off virtually every coast.

H.R. 1229: "PUTTING THE GULF OF MEXICO BACK TO WORK ACT"

Imposes Rushed, Arbitrary Permitting Deadlines

H.R. 1229 would force the Secretary of the Interior to approve or deny drilling permits within 30 days of their application date. If the Secretary failed to reach a decision within 60 days, the permit would be "deemed approved." These permit applications are for complicated and dangerous activities, and imposing such a rushed and arbitrary deadline would strain oversight capacity and prevent the agency from conducting a safe and adequate review. The National Oil Spill Commission found that lack of adequate government oversight was a leading cause of the BP Gulf oil disaster, and this bill could lead to even less oversight than the Minerals Management Service deployed before the BP Gulf oil disaster.

Provides Unnecessary Lease Extensions

H.R. 1229 would grant a 1-year lease extension on all non-producing leases set to expire on December 31, 2011, disregarding the existing process by which the Administration is granting lease extensions to those leases affected by the deepwater drilling moratorium. This provision unnecessarily grants lease extensions to companies not affected by the moratorium, and could deprive Americans of revenue from use of public resources.

Prevents Enforcement of Key Environmental Laws

H.R. 1229 would prohibit parties from recovering attorney's fees even if a federal court agrees that the government failed to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, or the Marine Mammal Protection Act. This attempt to close the courthouse door to the fishing industry, the tourism industry and environmental community to challenge government officials who fail to follow the law undermines our very system of justice and accountable government. This bill would also undermine the checks and balances of the judicial system by limiting the courts that could hear civil cases, and reduce the plaintiff's ability to provide substantive evidence to the courts.

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H.R. 1230: "RESTART AMERICAN OFFSHORE LEASING NOW ACT"

Reopens Lease Sales Cancelled in Response to the BP Gulf Oil Disaster

In an effort to employ lessons learned from the BP spill, the Administration cancelled leases in the Gulf (nos. 216, 218, and 222) and off of Virginia (no. 220) in May 2010. In December, 2010, the Administration announced that lease sales off the East Coast would be delayed as the agency needed to "proceed with caution and focus on creating a more stringent regulatory regime." H.R. 1230 would force the hand of the Administration, mandating that they offer these very lease sales, despite the Administration's acknowledgement that they are not adequately prepared to properly oversee these sales.

Sidesteps Proper Environmental Analysis

In the wake of the BP disaster, both the National Oil Spill Commission and the Council on Environmental Quality concluded that the pre-spill environmental review process for drilling impacts was grossly inadequate. Yet, H.R. 1230 actually *weakens* this process by end-running the court system and deeming old environmental impact assessments adequate for the leases within the bill. Because these analyses were completed *before* the spill (and are included in ongoing litigation), these bills block the ability of the federal government to analyze new impacts as a result of the spill, as well as new information learned from the disaster, and as a result could lead to further environmental impact from offshore drilling.

H.R. 1231: "REVERSING PRESIDENT OBAMA'S OFFSHORE MORATORIUM ACT"

Forces New Drilling in Sensitive Areas

H.R. 1231 would mandate new drilling by requiring a doubling of offshore oil production over current levels by 2027. This bill specifically targets the entire Atlantic coast, the Southern California coast, the Arctic Ocean and Alaska's Bristol Bay. This approach prioritizes a few Big Oil jobs over the vast network of jobs and businesses in tourism, fishing, and recreation sectors that rely on healthy oceans and coasts.

Does Nothing to Lower Gas Prices

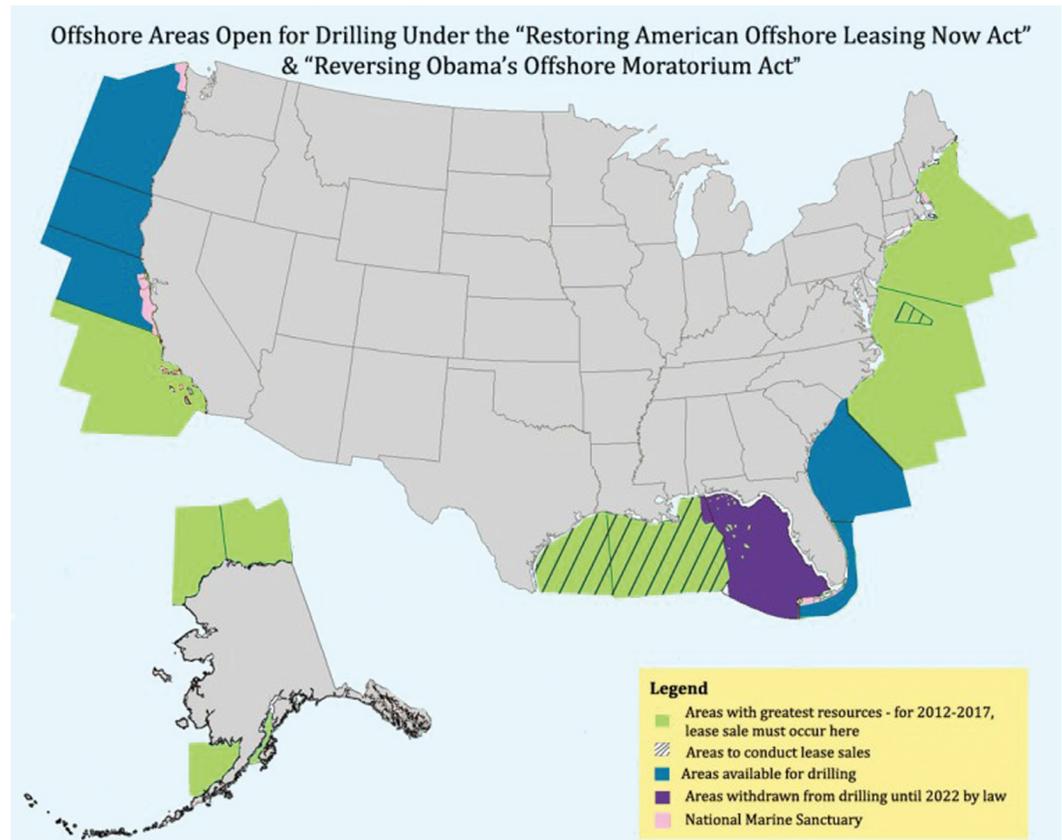
H.R. 1231 will do nothing to ease the pain at the pump for consumers. Oil is a global commodity, thus the price we pay for gas is dependent upon the global price of oil. Furthermore, the United States is home to less than 2 percent of the world's proven reserves of oil, yet we consume nearly 25 percent of global oil supply. The Energy Information Administration found that new drilling off our coasts would only reduce gas prices by a few pennies...in 2030. Efficiency and other oil savings measures can save a total of eight times more oil than opening new areas to drilling off America's shores.

Promotes Harmful Seismic Testing

While Section 4 of H.R. 1231 on "seismic surveying promotion" was removed by amendment, Representative Hastings intends to introduce it as stand-alone legislation. Currently, the oil and gas industry pays for seismic testing, which determines the presence of oil and gas beneath the sea floor. However, this provision would effectively require taxpayers to cover 50 percent of this testing, providing the oil industry with even more unnecessary subsidies. Additionally, this provision could lead to a sharp increase in seismic testing, which disrupts essential behavior in endangered whales and can dramatically reduce catch rates of commercial fish.

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Source: House Natural Resources Committee

FOCUSING ON LEGISLATION THAT WILL PROTECT OUR OCEANS AND THE PEOPLE WHO DEPEND ON THEM

Instead of commemorating the one-year mark of the nation's worst oil spill—and the death of 11 workers—with irresponsibly accelerating new dirty and dangerous ocean drilling, lawmakers should instead focus on legislation like H.R. 501 that would take advantage of lessons learned from the BP oil disaster, improve the safety of offshore drilling, and better protect the workers, wildlife, and communities that depend on our oceans and coasts.