

H.AMDT.842 to H.R. 5386

Sponsor: [Rep Poe, Ted](#) [R-TX-2] (offered 5/18/2006)

AMENDMENT DESCRIPTION:

Amendments sought to strike sections 104, 105, and 106 which prohibit the expenditure of funds for Outer Continental Shelf oil leasing activities in certain areas.

AMENDMENT PURPOSE:

An amendment comprised of 3 amendments offered together to strike sections 104, 105 and 106 from the bill. Sections 104, 105, and 106 provide that no funds provided in this title may be expended by the Department of the Interior for the conduct of offshore oil preleasing, leasing and related activities placed under restriction in the President's moratorium statement of June 12, 1998, in the areas of northern, central, and southern California; the North Atlantic; Washington and Oregon; and the eastern Gulf of Mexico south of 26 degrees north latitude and east of 86 degrees west longitude; no funds provided in this title may be expended by the Department of the Interior to conduct offshore oil preleasing, leasing and related activities in the eastern Gulf of Mexico planning area for any lands located outside Sale 181, as identified in the final Outer Continental Shelf 5-Year Oil and Gas Leasing Program, 1997-2002; and, no funds provided in this title may be expended by the Department of the Interior to conduct oil preleasing, leasing and related activities in the Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic planning areas.

Mr. POE. Mr. Chairman, I offer three amendments, and I ask unanimous consent they be considered together.

Mr. POE. Mr. Chairman, the United States has to be more self-sufficient when it comes to energy. We import 60 percent of our crude oil from foreign countries. In doing so, we are subject to the illegal price-fixing cartel known as OPEC. The Gulf of Mexico is responsible for one-third of the domestic oil production and 20 percent of the domestic natural gas production. My amendment will end the congressional moratoria on energy exploration along the Outer Continental Shelf.

Right now, Mr. Chairman, the areas shaded in blue are where we drill offshore. We drill offshore of the coast of Texas, Louisiana, and part of Mississippi and Alabama. All of the red on the West Coast, East Coast, and the other parts of the Gulf of Mexico are prohibited by law. Since the 1980s, Congress has been placing appropriations moratoriums on drilling in all these red areas that are outlined on the map, which is about 90 percent of the Outer Continental Shelf that is off limits to energy development.

All of these areas in these coastal States certainly want cheap gasoline and they want natural gas, but they do not want to drill in their neighborhoods. They would rather that Texas and Louisiana keep drilling in our neighborhoods. We can't have it both ways, cheap gasoline and refuse to drill offshore. It seems to me to be somewhat hypocritical, because this does not make sense.

In the Outer Continental Shelf there are about 300 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and more than 50 billion barrels of oil yet to be discovered. That is enough natural gas or oil to replace current imports from the Persian Gulf for 60 years and produce gasoline for 116 million cars for 15 years. And these are conservative estimates, since these are largely unexplored. There is going to be drilling off this area because Cuba and China are already making plans to drill 47 1/2 miles off Florida in those rich gulf reserves. It seems to me that we should take advantage of those reserves.

While people talk about the pollution that comes from drilling, many of the problems have been overstated. According to the 2002 National Academy of Sciences report, the largest cause of pollution is from nature. Shown by this chart, 60 percent of the pollution to our shores is by nature itself. So the best way we prevent the number one cause of pollution to our shores is to eliminate this and drill for it.

Boating. All those boats off the shores of our coasts are producing 32 percent of the oil seepage. Tankers from the Middle East are 3 percent. And offshore drilling only accounts for 2 percent of the pollution to our shores.

It obviously makes sense to drill offshore, Mr. Chairman, because nature is the primary cause of the pollution to our beaches.

When Katrina and Rita hit the gulf coast this last year, over 100 platforms were damaged. But seepage from the Gulf of Mexico almost did not exist because the valves and the pumps for these offshore rigs were shut off immediately. So it seemed that opening up these areas would be an obvious choice.

We are the only major industrial power in the world that has this silly rule about not drilling offshore. They drill in the North Sea and around the world, and they do so safely. It is important that we use some common sense.

Americans worry about skyrocketing energy prices and lack of energy and want solutions. A decision where we drill is going to have to be made and made very soon by Americans. This is a price issue, but it is also a national security issue. Those who say "no" to offshore drilling have no solutions to this problem. We can drill offshore safely, environmentally correct; and when we get over the fear factor and take control of our own energy needs, this country will be better off.

I yield 1 minute to Mr. Green from Texas.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Chairman, Members, I want to thank my colleague for yielding me a minute. I support his amendment. Obviously, I think that would be the ideal provision we need to do to eliminate that moratorium. The committee, I think, has struck a compromise on natural gas, although Congressman Poe and I know the difficulties of just drilling for one substance over the other. But obviously I support the amendment and I think the committee, though, came up with a compromise, and we will fight that battle later.

Mr. POE. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina. I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. Foley).

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Chairman, I certainly understand the politics of petroleum. But I represent Florida, and I represent the coast that we consider a valuable resource for tourism, the environment, the ecology.

Let me remind my colleagues the area that they are proposing to drill both oil and natural gas wells has recently been referred to as Hurricane Alley. The gulf coast, we all know now, after Katrina, is responsible for 25 percent of U.S. production of natural gas. Following Katrina and Rita, almost 75 percent of the natural gas production in the gulf was shut down and not producing.

As of May 3, almost 13 percent of natural gas production in the Gulf of Mexico was still offline 9 months later. So it begs the question, why would you put more rigs in a vulnerable place?

Now, I understand some States like drilling, like oil and like offshore rigs. And my question, or my statement, to you is, have at it. But I do want to have the opportunity as a Floridian to defend ourselves from having oil drilling rigs off our coastline.

Several Governors are opposed to the provisions, including Governor Schwarzenegger; my own Governor Bush who sent a letter to the Speaker just yesterday; Governor Mark Sanford, our former colleague from South Carolina; Democrat Governor Corzine of New Jersey; Mike Easley of North Carolina; and Ted Kulongoski of Oregon. Our delegation remains strongly opposed to drilling for oil and gas in this very, very vulnerable area.

Let me tell you the infrastructure problems suffered by our recent hurricanes. A Congressional Budget Office study estimated that gulf energy infrastructure repair costs will be between \$18 billion and \$31 billion, just from the damages the hurricane created. So let's build some more rigs in this very vulnerable area.

I mentioned the responsibility of natural gas. The gulf has 30 percent of U.S. crude oil production, again another reason we do not want to endanger our coastline. Again, 9 months later, almost 22 percent remain offline.

So I urge defeat of this amendment, removal of the Peterson amendment from this appropriation bill, and let us do something right and not simply succumb to the politics of convenience on energy prices.

Mr. POE. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I would like to point out to my friend from Florida, we just respectfully disagree. But he has made the argument for why we need to drill somewhere other than the gulf coast.

Rita and Katrina basically shut down all the rigs in the gulf coast. Twenty-two percent of the refineries in the United States come from my district. They were shut down for weeks. That is 20 percent of the gasoline for the rest of the United States. We drill in one area. We drill in Hurricane Alley, as Mr. Foley has pointed out. We need to drill off even the sacred west coast of California and off the east coast because there is oil and natural gas there. We need to open up the moratoriums that this Congress has put on us. The American people are demanding answers. They want cheaper gasoline, but yet we refuse to take care of ourselves.

I urge adoption of this amendment which will allow or release the restrictions and then we can start drilling where there is oil and natural gas to take care of ourselves. The hurricanes proved we can do it safely and securely without damage to the environment.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. Pallone).

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to this amendment. In my home State of New Jersey, tourism supports nearly 500,000 jobs and indirectly generates \$16.6 billion in wages and \$5.5 billion in State tax revenues. Much of that enormous economic engine is driven by our coastline which we have worked hard to protect.

All it takes is one incident from an industrial drilling rig sitting in the ocean to put this entire economic engine at risk. What this amendment would do is open up OCS areas as close as 3 miles from shore to drilling. There is no buffer here, no minimum barrier. If we pass this amendment, we can see drilling rigs as close as 3 miles from our shores. And for what?

This will do nothing for the price of oil. It takes up to 7 years to begin producing from an offshore lease.

And I would also like to know why the oil industry is so keen on getting these areas open for drilling when they have thousands of leases already in place, both onshore and offshore that they haven't bothered to explore.

Mr. Chairman, our coasts are simply too valuable to risk like this. If we had to do a balancing act, there is no way you could support this amendment.

I urge a "no" vote on this amendment. Vote to protect our coasts.

Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina. Mr. Chairman, I yield for the purpose of making a unanimous-consent request to the gentleman from Washington.

(Mr. DICKS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DICKS. I just want to rise in opposition to the amendment and in support of the position taken by the chairman and the committee.

Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina. I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. Capps).

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong opposition to the Poe amendment, and I would like to set the record straight. This current ban on new drilling is actually two moratoria, one of which is enacted by Congress annually through a ban on Federal funding to drill for oil in areas now off limits.

In addition, there is a complementary moratorium put into place originally in 1991 through an executive moratorium by George H. W. Bush, extended till 2012 by Bill Clinton, embraced by the current President in his current 2007 budget.

The provision in the Interior bill and in the Poe amendment eliminate the annual congressional moratoria. It doesn't end the Presidential moratorium. However, the President certainly has the authority to revise or revoke his existing Presidential moratorium before 2012.

I am not a betting person, but I would wager that if Congress eliminates the moratorium through this legislation and encourages the President to do the same, he is going to revoke the Presidential moratorium. Why not? Drilling advocates will argue that the people, through Congress, have spoken in favor of new drilling; and when that Presidential moratorium is revoked, it would mean an immediate end to the ban on new drilling in waters off our coastal States.

It is not just coincidental this amendment is coming up just as the next 5-year plan is being enacted. This would happen right away.

Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina. I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. Young).

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Chairman, this is not some political issue. This is serious business. You are dealing with some of the most fragile marine ecosystems in the world. This moratorium was put on here for a good reason. And I mentioned earlier during general debate, it has evolved into a workable, effective protection for those ecosystems.

The ecology of some of those Florida waters is just unbelievable. Now, the authorizing committee has been working on this issue for several months trying to come up with a good answer, a good responsible answer. Now, this is being offered without any hearings by the subcommittee, no hearings by full committees, just as a whim to accomplish something that some special interests want to see accomplished. This is not good government. This is a bad amendment, and we need to be very careful about what we do, not only on this amendment today, but on the Peterson amendment that we will deal with later.

The CHAIRMAN. All time for debate pursuant to the unanimous consent request has expired.

The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. Poe).

The question was taken; and the Chairman announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. POE. Mr. Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

On agreeing to the Poe amendments (A009) Failed by recorded vote: 141 - 279.