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CONTACT: [Jill Strait](#) or [Spencer Pederson](#) or [Crystal Feldman](#)
202-226-9019

Chairman Hastings' Remarks at Press Conference Announcing Three Bills to Expand Offshore Energy Production

WASHINGTON, D.C. –Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04) at a press conference today [announced three separate bills](#) to expand offshore energy production in order to create jobs, lower energy costs, and improve national security by lessening our dependence on foreign energy. Following are Chairman Hastings' prepared remarks from today's press conference:

"House Republicans recently announced the American Energy Initiative. This is an ongoing effort to expand American energy production to create American jobs and to stop the Obama Administration policies that are raising energy prices.

As Chairman of the Natural Resources Committee, I'm specifically focused on increasing energy production offshore and on federal lands. These areas hold vast energy resources, and they are areas where the Obama Administration has done the most to stop and delay production.

House Republicans have taken a pledge against passing large, comprehensive bills. Instead, through the American Energy Initiative, we'll work to advance solutions through individual, specific bills. Speaker Boehner has used the term "bite-sized."

Today, I'm introducing three bills – all of which reverse specific actions taken by the Obama Administration to block offshore energy production.

The first is the Putting the Gulf Back to Work Act.

This bill will end the Obama Administration's de facto moratorium in the Gulf of Mexico in a safe, responsible and transparent manner. It saves American jobs by preventing deliberate government inaction and bureaucratic stalling.

The bill reforms the law by requiring that a permit be issued before a well is drilled. It also requires the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a safety review to ensure that proposed drilling operations "meet all critical safety system requirements."

The bill sets a 30-day timeline for the Secretary to act on drilling permits – either to approve the permits or not approve the permits.

The Secretary can have two 15-day extension periods. However, he must provide applicants with clear reasons for any delay or rejection. Employers need certainty and clarity, and workers need to get back on the job.

For the several dozen permits that were approved before the Administration halted all activity in the Gulf in May 2010, the Secretary will have a firm 30 days to act on restarting the

permits. As a matter of simple fairness, if the Secretary fails to act, the leases will be placed in suspension until a decision is made.

It's been over 10 months since activity was halted. These businesses need to be allowed to resume activities that were approved and underway.

Ending the moratorium in the Gulf will have an immediate impact on both jobs and energy production.

The second bill is the Restarting American Offshore Leasing Now Act.

This bill will expand American energy production and create jobs by requiring the Secretary to conduct three lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico and one in offshore Virginia.

The four specific sales in this bill were all scheduled. But when the Obama Administration effectively reinstated a ban on new offshore drilling, the sales were cancelled or delayed.

Due to the Obama Administration's actions, 2011 will be the first year since 1958 that the federal government will not hold an offshore lease sale.

The bill requires all four lease sales to take place either before June 1, 2012 or within one year of enactment of the bill.

The third bill is the Reversing President Obama's Moratorium Act.

In 2008, in response to record high gasoline prices, both Congress and President Bush lifted long-standing moratoria on offshore drilling. However, since taking office President Obama has effectively reinstated a ban on new drilling by placing the entire Atlantic Coast, the entire Pacific Coast and much of Alaska off-limits.

This bill requires the Administration to move forward in the 2012-2017 offshore drilling plan with leasing in areas containing the most oil and natural gas.

Even in the face of rising gasoline prices, it appears President Obama wants to drill nowhere new. This bill says let's move forward with leasing and drilling in those areas where we know America has real, significant resources.

In contrast to the President's drill nowhere new plan, this is a drill smart plan.

This bill also requires the Secretary to set specific production goals for five-year plans. For the 2012-2017 plan it sets a goal of 3 million barrels of oil per day, and 10 billion cubic feet of natural gas per day by 2027.

By comparison to today's levels, this increase in oil equates to a tripling of current American offshore production, and would reduce foreign imports by nearly one-third.

I want to emphasize that these are the first three of an array of bills that will be introduced as part of the American Energy Initiative.

Coming soon will be bills focused on expanding renewable energy, onshore production, hydropower, coal and critical minerals that are vital to renewable energy and new technology.

The Republican Members of the Natural Resources Committee are anxious to get to work advancing these proposals and will be moving aggressively.

We must unlock our American energy resources to decrease our dependence on foreign energy, create jobs, lower gasoline prices, and protect our national security.”

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