



Obama Stands in the Way of Our Energy Future

By Congressman Doc Hastings

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In case you haven't noticed, today marks President Obama's 100th day in office. One thing that hasn't changed over the past three months is the President's ongoing practice of using empty rhetoric and straw-man arguments. Americans only had to hear the President's recent Earth Day speech to realize how he continues to use these tactics.

During his remarks, President Obama pledged that "as we transition to renewable energy, we can and should increase our domestic production of oil and natural gas. We're not going to transform our economy overnight. We still need more oil, we still need more gas."

While the President certainly makes it sound like his Administration is acting to make us less dependent on foreign oil, the reality is far different. His Administration has spent its first 100 days in office throwing up roadblocks for the production of American-made energy.

First, the Interior Department withdrew areas offered for 77 oil and gas leases in Utah that could cost American taxpayers millions in lost lease bids, production royalties and the energy needed to offset rising imports of oil and gas. Second, the Department delayed for six months the development of the new 5-year leasing program for offshore drilling. Third, the Department delayed the new round of oil shale research, demonstration, and development leases that would help advance American technology and create high-tech jobs in Colorado, Wyoming and Utah. And finally, the Administration has still not expressed its opposition to a recent DC-based court decision that canceled the current offshore drilling plan because of a lawsuit filed by Democrat allies.

Do these actions sound like they come from an Administration that wants to "increase our domestic production of oil and natural gas?"

The President also went on to say that "if we've got some [oil and natural gas] here in the United States that we can use, we should find it and do so in an environmentally sustainable way."

Wait a minute - *if* we've got oil and gas in the United States? The question isn't if we have oil and gas - the question is if the Federal Government will unlock it and allow us to access our domestic energy sources.

We already know that America's oil and gas resources are abundant - but locked up from being accessed. In fact, according to the Department of Interior's own figures, only 3% of America's federal offshore and 6% of our federal onshore lands are available for

development – which means that an overwhelming majority of our oil and natural gas resources remain off limits and untapped. A February 2009 report by the American Energy Alliance found that permanently lifting the moratoria on energy production in the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) would create \$8 trillion in additional economic output, 1.2 million new, well-paying jobs annually across the country and \$70 billion in additional wages each year. Additionally, the federal government would collect over \$2.2 trillion in total tax receipts – which would clearly reduce our deficit more than the \$100 million in savings the President and his Cabinet announced last week.

Given this overwhelming data, why would the President act as if the jury is still out on the existence of new oil and natural gas in America?

Finally, the President demonstrated another favorite rhetorical trick in his speech - making straw-man arguments that blame “those” (presumably Republicans or his political opponents) for ideas and arguments that they don’t actually advocate. He warned “now, there are those who still cling to the notion that we ought to just continue doing what we do; that we can’t change” and that “politicians decide, look, even though we know it’s something that has to be done, we’re just going to put it off.”

Mr. President, if you are referring to Democrat cap-and-tax plans that would, as you said as a candidate, cause energy costs to “skyrocket” and cost up to \$3,100 per family, you are right. There are Members of Congress and people across the country who do not believe that the Federal government should make it more expensive for people to turn on their lights, fill up their cars and heat their homes in the middle of a serious recession.

However, who exactly said that America “can’t change” and that we want to just “put off” action on energy policy? It certainly isn’t members of the Republican Party. In fact, Republicans have a forward looking, all-of-the-above energy plan that includes both renewable energy sources along with domestic oil and gas production.

In my district in Central Washington state, we have proven that the all-of-the-above approach works because it has provided residents with some of the lowest electricity prices in the country. My district is home to the Grand Coulee Dam and vast amounts of clean, renewable hydropower, the only nuclear power plant in the Pacific Northwest and the majority of our state’s wind farms. However, we understand that we cannot rely exclusively on wind and solar power because, as we all know, there are times when the wind doesn’t blow and the sun doesn’t shine. Successful deployment of renewable sources like wind and solar depend on the backup of hydro, nuclear and gas facilities that can be turned up when needed. American can’t depend upon one answer to our future energy needs, we must pursue all our options.

The campaign is over and so is the President’s honeymoon period. Now its policy-making time – and the President should ensure that his actions match his words. Instead of simply talking about his support for increasing our domestic oil and natural gas production, the President needs to stop standing in the way and instead make it a reality.

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