

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 11, 2009

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As you know, the U.S. Court of Appeals vacated and remanded the current 2007-2012 offshore oil and natural gas leasing plan on April 17, 2009 – over 22 days ago. However, we have yet to hear from the Department of the Interior about this significant decision.

We strongly urge the Department of Interior to immediately defend and restore the plan for the development of American oil and gas resources on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). The Department has at its disposal more than 1600 pages of environmental documents used to develop the OCS plan to complete the analysis requested by the Court.

Millions of Americans depend on the (OCS) leasing program for their livelihood. It is a major source of revenue for our national and state governments and a future energy lifeline to the American people. American oil and gas production provides over a million American jobs. And the action by this court, and a failure to reinstitute the plan by the Administration, endangers the jobs of tens of thousands of geologists, engineers, and dock workers in the industry, as well as millions of Americans who depend on the availability of affordable energy.

The current five-year plan has generated more than \$10 billion in federal revenue from lessees – note, this money is more than half the ‘savings’ projected by President Obama in his May 7th announcement of his Fiscal Year 2010 budget. Failure to reinstate the lease plan could force the federal government to refund the entire \$10 billion and threaten oil and gas production in the Gulf of Mexico that has already come online under this program. The government will also have to forego billions of more dollars expected from upcoming lease sales.

In addition to jobs and revenue, the 2007-2012 offshore program promises vitally needed American energy that will make our country less dependent on foreign oil. The Administration’s own projections show our nation will require large amounts of oil and natural gas for decades to fuel vehicles, heat homes, generate electricity, and manufacture American products. Fortunately, oil and gas is abundantly available offshore below our own waters, where most Americans want it produced and where U.S. workers can safely produce it using state-of-the-art technology.

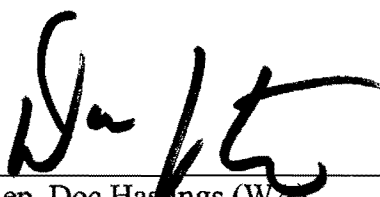
If left unaddressed, the court decision becomes a de facto ban on any new offshore drilling.

The Administration frequently expresses its support for offshore development and the importance of oil and gas production to the American economy. However, the Administrations' words are rarely matched by substantive action that will increase American energy production. The Department now has a clear opportunity to turn words into action by restoring the 2007-2012 offshore leasing program now. In addition to reinstating the current program, the federal government should also move quickly to open new areas to development previously kept off limits by the current government moratoria. Potential revenue from these areas exceeds \$1.3 trillion and could create tens of thousands of jobs, according to a study by ICF International.

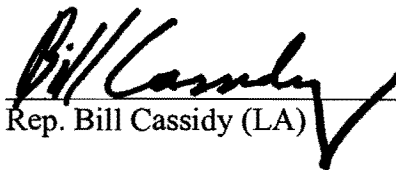
Given the urgency of this request, and as a result of the Department's silence on this issue for over three weeks, we request a reply within two weeks.

Sincerely,

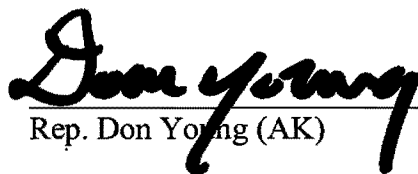
Sincerely,



Rep. Doc Hastings (WA)
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources



Rep. Bill Cassidy (LA)



Rep. Don Young (AK)



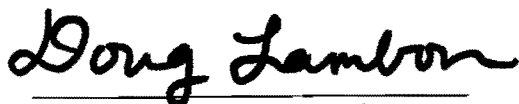
Rep. John Fleming (LA)




Rep. Louie Gohmert (TX)



Rep. Jason Chaffetz (UT)



Rep. Doug Lamborn (CO)



Rep. Rob Bishop (UT)



Rep. Steve Scalise (LA)
