

Chairman Doc Hastings  
Natural Resources Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
1203 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Edward Markey  
Natural Resources Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
2108 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

April 12, 2011

Dear Chairman Hastings and Ranking Member Markey:

On behalf of our millions of members we are writing in opposition to H.R.1229, the Putting the Gulf of Mexico Back to Work Act; H.R.1230, the Restarting American Offshore Leasing Now Act; and H.R.1231, the Reversing President Obama's Offshore Moratorium Act. At a time when Congress should be addressing the systemic failures that led to the BP disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, these pieces of legislation irresponsibly accelerate the very processes that led to the largest environmental disaster in our nation's history, short-cutting environmental safeguards and putting workers and coastal communities at greater risk.

Oil spills like the BP Gulf oil disaster not only threaten ocean and coastal ecosystems, but the economies and communities that rely on them. Hundreds of thousands of jobs in fisheries, tourism, and recreation rely on healthy coastal and marine environments. In the Gulf alone, fishing and tourism bring \$57 billion in sales and support over 830,000 jobs.

The bi-partisan National Oil Spill Commission called for systemic reform in the oversight and environmental regulation of our oil and gas development process, saying that industry and political pressure had led to production being prioritized over protection of human health and the environment. Yet, each of these three bills irresponsibly prioritizes development and production at the cost of safety, science and the environment.

These pieces of legislation force decisions on drilling permits on arbitrary deadlines, and further undermine regulatory oversight. They eliminate meaningful analyses of potential environmental consequences, and force decisions based on production goals, rather than on science and the careful consideration of potential risks.

H.R. 1229 forces Secretarial consideration of drilling permits on a rushed and arbitrary timeline, and would automatically grant approval of permits if the Secretary fails to meet the deadline. H.R. 1230 denies the Department of the Interior the opportunity to conduct thorough and site specific environmental analyses and denies the public an opportunity to participate by forcing lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico and off the Coast of Virginia on a rushed timeline.

H.R. 1231 would force Interior to offer for lease sweeping areas of the outer continental shelf off the east and west coast, in the Arctic and Bristol Bay. It would require a doubling of current production without regard for other ocean values. This would not only open up vast new areas to oil and gas drilling without proper analysis of environmental risks, but again would incentivize production over

safety. HR 1231 would also force taxpayers to foot half the bill for certain oil and gas exploration costs. In our current fiscal climate, oil and gas companies, some of the richest corporations on the planet, do not need yet another subsidy.

There are better ways to provide stability for consumers and cut our nation's oil dependence. Despite claims to the contrary, more ocean drilling will not lead to lower gas prices. The only real solution to protect consumers from high and volatile gas prices is to reduce our oil dependency through more efficient cars and trucks, clean fuels, and transportation choices such as commuter rail.

By 2030, efficiency and other oil savings measures can save a total of 8 times more oil than opening new areas to drilling off America's shores or in protected sensitive areas. Furthermore, ending tax loopholes and government handouts for Big Oil, and investing one cent per dollar of oil companies profit into ultra-clean vehicle research and development, could help lower oil demand and reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil.

A year after the BP Gulf oil disaster, oil is still coming ashore. There is much work to do to restore the Gulf of Mexico and ensure that the jobs and economies that depend on a healthy ecosystem are sustained. These bills not only fail to address the lessons learned from the BP disaster, they double down on the strategies and flawed approach that led to the disaster in the first place. Instead, Congress should be working to implement the recommendations of the National Oil Spill Commission; ensure full restoration of the Gulf of Mexico; and promote a clean energy strategy to reduce oil demand.

Sincerely,

**Alaska Wilderness League**

**Bedford Global Warming Action Coalition**

**Cape & Islands Self-Reliance Corp.**

**Center for Biological Diversity**

**Chesapeake Bay Foundation**

**Clean Ocean Action**

**Clean Power Now**

**Clean Water Action**

**Conservation Law Foundation**

**Defenders of Wildlife**

**Earthjustice**

**Endangered Species Coalition**

**Environment Northeast**

**Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges**

**Grace Team Massachusetts**

**Gulf Coast Environmental Defense**

**Healthlink**

**League of Conservation Voters**

**Lexington Global Warming Action Coalition**

**Marine Fish Conservation Network**

**Massachusetts Climate Action Network**

**Massachusetts League of Environmental  
Voters**

**MassAudubon**

**Massachusetts Climate Action Network Bolton  
Local**

**Massachusetts Climate Action Network  
Harvard Local**

**National Audubon Society**

**National Estuarine Research Reserve  
Association**

**Natural Resources Defense Council**

**New England Coastal Wildlife Alliance**

**New Jersey Environmental Federation**

**New Jersey Environmental Lobby**

**Ocean Champions**

**Ocean Conservancy**

**Ocean Conservation Research**

**Ocean River Institute**

**Pacific Environment**

**People For Puget Sound**

**Physicians for Social Responsibility**

**Public Citizen**

**Sierra Club**

**Somerville Climate Action**

**Southern Environmental Law Center**

**Surfrider Foundation**

**Sustainable Duxbury**

**Sustainable Life Solutions**

**Sustainable South Shore**

**Sustainable Sudbury**

**Vermont Public Interest Research Group**

**The Wildlife Society**