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Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future • Clean Ocean Action • Clean Water Action •
Connecticut Citizen Action Group • Conservation Law Foundation •
Defenders of Wildlife • Earth Day Network • Earthjustice • Energy Action Coalition •
Environment America • Environmental Defense Fund • Friends of the Earth • Greenpeace •
Gulf Coast Environmental Defense • Gulf Restoration Network •
Natural Resources Defense Council • Oceana •
Pacific Environment • Physicians for Social Responsibility • Public Citizen •
Safe Climate Campaign • Sierra Club • Southern Alliance for Clean Energy •
USAction • The Wilderness Society**

May 16, 2011

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters we ask you to support S. 940, Senator Menendez's "Close Big Oil Loopholes Act of 2011" and reject Senator McConnell's S. 953, the "Offshore Production and Safety Act of 2011." Both bills are expected to come up for a vote this week.

Senator Robert Menendez's legislation would repeal over \$20 billion in handouts earmarked for some of the world's largest and most profitable corporations and direct the money towards reducing our nation's deficit.

In contrast, Senator McConnell's bill provides a false and dangerous response to our nation's energy crisis. This legislation irresponsibly accelerates the very processes that led to the largest environmental disaster in our nation's history and does nothing to ease the pain consumers are feeling at the pump. It would also overturn an important environmental victory, the Presidential decision to prohibit leasing off the coast of Virginia. Instead of providing yet more handouts to the oil industry, Congress should address the systemic failures that led to the BP disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, support clean energy solutions that would truly help reduce the price consumers pay for transportation, and protect our coasts and oceans.

The Close Big Oil Tax Loopholes Act of 2011 takes an important first step by eliminating billions of dollars of subsidies for dangerous and dirty technologies of the past. Oil and gas companies continue to make record profits and clearly do not need subsidies or assistance from American taxpayers. In the first quarter of 2011, the major oil companies made more than \$30 billion in profits.

Senator McConnell's bill, on the other hand, would further exacerbate our dependence on antiquated fossil fuels, force decisions on drilling permits based on arbitrary deadlines and undermine regulatory oversight. This legislation would eliminate meaningful analyses of potential environmental consequences from specified leases in the Gulf of Mexico and the Arctic Ocean, and allow oil and gas companies to bypass crucial environmental reviews. In particular, the bill interferes directly in the controversial Chukchi Sea Lease Sale 193 in Alaska deeming it in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, directly overruling the court-ordered supplement to the insufficient original environmental review.

There are better ways to provide stability for consumers and cut the 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 country's oil dependency through more efficient cars and trucks, clean alternative fuels, and better 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 makes financial sense at a time when the federal government is looking for ways shrink the deficit.

For all of these reasons, we strongly urge you to support the Close Big Oil Tax Loopholes Act of 2011 and oppose the Offshore Production and Safety Act of 2011.

Sincerely,

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