



Senator Feinstein, 19 Bipartisan Senators Urge Congress to Maintain Ban on Off-Shore Drilling

October 11, 2005

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today joined Senator Jon Corzine (D-N.J.) and a bipartisan group of Senators to urge the Energy and Natural Resources Committee to reject efforts to end the 24-year-old ban on off-shore drilling in an upcoming budget reconciliation measure.

In addition to Senators Feinstein and Corzine, those who signed a letter to Energy and Natural Resources Chairman Pete Domenici (R-N.M.) and Ranking Member Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.) include Senators Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), Susan Collins (R-Maine), Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.), Elizabeth Dole (R-N.C.), Russ Feingold (D-Wis.), Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii), Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), John Kerry (D-Mass.), Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.), Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), Mel Martinez (R-Fla.), Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.), Patty Murray (D-Wash.), Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), Jack Reed (D-R.I.), Paul Sarbanes (D-Md.), and Olympia Snowe (R-Maine). Following is the text of the letter:

“We are writing to urge you not to include any language in the Energy Committee’s portion of the budget reconciliation bill or any other legislation that would weaken or destroy the 24-year moratoria on oil and gas leasing in the Outer Continental Shelf.

We strongly believe that the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina underscores this nation’s unhealthy dependence on foreign oil and serves as a blatant reminder that we must take steps to reduce oil consumption and increase energy conservation. Rather than open up areas on the Outer Continental Shelf currently under moratoria to drilling for more oil and natural gas, we should establish long-term policies that will improve our refinery infrastructure and help wean this country off its reliance on oil.

The Coast Guard estimates that more than seven million gallons of oil – about two-thirds as much oil as spilled from the Exxon Valdez tanker in 1989 – were spilled around southeast Louisiana alone as a result of Hurricane Katrina, threatening the region’s fragile coastal marshes and marine life. Expanding oil and gas operations in the OCS, especially in hurricane prone areas, places our sensitive coastal areas in greater peril. This demonstrates the type of environmental danger that scientists have been warning us about for years.

As you recall, during the energy bill debate, efforts to undermine the OCS moratoria threatened to stall the bill on the Senate floor. Undermining the moratoria in the Energy Committee’s portion of the reconciliation bill would not only be divisive but would also be a dramatic shift in policy.

We urge you not to include any provisions in the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources' portion of the budget reconciliation bill or any other legislation that would in any way undermine the OCS moratoria. We look forward to a discussion of more effective long-term solutions to reduce our nation's reliance on oil.

Thank you for your consideration."

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