

Coastal Oil Drilling Won't Solve Energy Crisis Congresswoman Matsui urges focus on renewables

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Washington, DC — Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) spoke against legislation to lift the bipartisan moratorium on drilling for oil and gas off the coasts of states like California and Florida, which dates back to 1982. Rather than moving the nation's energy policy towards developing alternative fuel sources, this legislation increases the nation's reliance on non-renewable fossil fuels by establishing a complex incentive system to tempt states into allowing drilling closer to their coastlines.

"Providing less-expensive energy to our constituents and reducing our dependence on foreign oil should be one of Congress's top priorities. But we cannot drill our way to energy independence as some claim," stated Congresswoman Matsui. "Instead of drilling off our coasts, we should devote resources to encourage renewable energy use, increase energy efficiency and to perform innovative research on advanced technologies."

As a Member of the Science Committee, Congresswoman Matsui has worked to modernize our nation's energy policy to increase energy efficiency and move toward increased use of renewable energy sources. During the committee's mark-up of energy research and development legislation this week (H.R. 5656), the Committee adopted Congresswoman Matsui's amendment, which directs the Department of Energy (DoE) to maintain core competencies in the full range of renewable energy technologies. Additionally, the Congresswoman called on DoE to support regional, state and local efforts to develop renewable technologies and deploy those already in use, so they can be accessed by the organizations and people on the ground developing and deploying these important technologies.

[Click here to view Congresswoman Matsui's floor statement on offshore oil drilling](#)

The text of her remarks, as delivered, are below:

“Mr. Speaker, the Pacific Ocean is synonymous with California. California’s beaches are world-renowned tourist destinations. People from my hometown of Sacramento can attest to the beauty of nearby Stinson and Dillon Beaches, of Point Reyes and Capitola near Santa Cruz.

“But our coasts are more than playgrounds. We Californians consider them to be national treasures. And we certainly wouldn’t sell them off to oil developers.

“But that is a major element of what the bill before us proposes to do. This legislation tempts states to sell off their natural heritage by presenting a false choice between federal dollars and their coastlines.

“Even worse, the closer to shore a cash-strapped state allows drilling, the more money it stands to receive. In other words, the more intrusive the drilling, the larger the payoff.

“The fact is, Mr. Speaker, we simply don’t need to expand our drilling capacity. 80 percent of our nation’s offshore oil and gas reserves are already open for drilling. Energy companies hold over 6,000 unused leases in these waters. There is no reason to overturn a 25-year-old bipartisan drilling moratorium when we haven’t even utilized our existing capacity yet.

“Providing less-expensive energy to our constituents and reducing our dependence on foreign oil should be one of Congress’s top priorities. But we cannot drill our way to energy independence as some claim.

“Sadly, we should have expected such an idea from a Congress that continues to rely on the same tired and misguided drilling-only approach. This strategy has been the defining element of our failed energy policy for the last six years.

“America can do better, but today’s proposal takes us in the wrong direction. Instead of drilling off our coasts, we should devote resources to encourage renewable energy use, and to perform innovative research on advanced technologies.

“Mr. Speaker, on the Science Committee we work together in a bipartisan way to create balanced and forward-looking policy. For instance, earlier this week, the Committee approved legislation to authorize alternative energy development programs.

“Unfortunately, it seems that today’s legislation has been narrowly written to benefit oil interests at the expense of states like mine. We should follow the example of the Science Committee, Mr. Speaker, and rely on emerging research and proven scientific fact. Both of these will demonstrate that we do not — we should not — drill off our coasts.

“Increasing our energy independence should be the first great policy challenge our country addresses in the 21st century. We would be well-advised to consider forward-looking energy proposals.

“Revisiting old arguments and despoiling natural treasures wastes a golden opportunity to put our nation on a course toward energy independence and responsible environmental stewardship.

“I urge my colleagues to defeat this misguided and unnecessary legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.”

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