

exhilarating. Their expressions and comments said it all. Kiara Cherry remarked, "Oh my God! The First Lady is at the McAlpine—I am so excited!" She added that meeting the First Lady was on her list of things to do before she turned 15 and now she could check it off her list. Devonte Harris, 12, of Forestdale, agreed, saying, "I'm just really happy right now." Lastly, Rakya Holmes, 8, whose godmother's home was destroyed in the storms, noted "She smelled good, and I love her." These reactions by the children at Camp Noah expressed our sheer excitement and gratitude to the First Lady. The faces of the children were priceless. The First Lady's visit was a life-changing event for the kids and a morale boost for our community.

It takes tremendous coordination, hard work and organization to make a visit by the First Lady of the United States a reality. The fact that our First Lady Michelle Obama would take the time to visit with us in a tornado affected community in Birmingham is a real testament to her dedication and commitment to helping us overcome this disaster.

I want to commend the City of Birmingham, the extraordinary staff of McAlpine Recreation Center and Camp Noah, as well as UAB's MHRC Healthy Happy Kids program for making the First Lady's visit a huge success. As the Representative of the 7th Congressional District of Alabama, I was extremely proud of all of the efforts made by our community working together to leave a lasting impression on the First Lady. The excitement and joy on the children's faces at Camp Noah made it all worthwhile. Thank you First Lady Michelle Obama!

# CONGRESSIONAL REPLACEMENT OF PRESIDENT OBAMA'S ENERGY-RESTRICTING AND JOB-LIMITING OFFSHORE DRILLING PLAN

SPEECH OF

**HON. MAZIE K. HIRONO**

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, July 24, 2012*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 6082) to officially replace, within the 60-day Congressional review period under the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, President Obama's Proposed Final Outer Continental Shelf Oil & Gas Leasing Program (2012-2017) with a congressional plan that will conduct additional oil and natural gas lease sales to promote offshore energy development, job creation, and increased domestic energy production to ensure a more secure energy future in the United States, and for other purposes:

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. Chair, I oppose H.R. 6082, the Congressional Replacement of President Obama's Energy-Restricting and Job-Limiting Offshore Drilling Plan.

This is the current Majority's 12th giveaway for Big Oil in the last 18 months. I've consistently opposed these prior 11 measures on the House floor. The Senate has failed to pass any of the prior bills, and President Obama has consistently stated his intention to veto those measures.

The majority claims that this bill is about lowering energy prices and creating jobs.

Let's be clear—this is a bill against President Obama's offshore drilling plan.

Today, more than 75 percent of the offshore oil and gas resources are available for drilling under that plan. We have 50 percent more floating drilling rigs operating in the Gulf of Mexico than we did prior to the BP spill and have more total rigs operating in the United States than does the rest of the world combined. Domestic oil production is at an 18 year high and oil and gas companies continue to enjoy substantial profits—all on top of tax breaks totaling over \$4 billion per year. In addition, this year the U.S. became a net exporter of oil for the first time since 1949.

My home state of Hawaii relies on imported oil from both foreign and U.S. sources for 90 percent of our primary energy. We use oil to generate our electricity and to fuel our vehicles. We also pay three times the average price that the mainland pays for that electricity and our gas prices are constantly the highest in the nation—despite all of the drilling that is currently happening.

That's why this attack on President Obama's comprehensive approach to energy—producing more oil and boosting clean energy—is especially troubling.

It's also troubling that the majority seem to be consciously ignoring key safety recommendations and preventing proper environmental reviews.

We all remember April 20, 2010. That is the date that the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded. This accident killed 11 crew members and injured numerous others. Over 4 million barrels of oil gushed into the Gulf of Mexico, and the spill could not be contained for almost 3 months.

In response President Obama created the bipartisan National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling. The commission concluded that if more effective oversight of safety and environmental protection had been conducted—by both the government and the industry itself—the disaster could have been avoided. The commission then made a series of recommendations to prevent another spill from occurring.

Representative MARKEY introduced these recommendations as legislation in January of 2011. I'm proud to be a cosponsor of this bill, H.R. 501. However, I'm disappointed that there has not even been a committee hearing on this important legislation.

That's not all. On July 24, 2012, the U.S. Chemical Safety Board released a report which found that at the time of the 2010 Deepwater Horizon blowout, BP and other companies involved in that accident had failed to implement safety recommendations made by the Board in 2007.

The 2007 recommendations stemmed from the investigation of a March 2005 explosion at BP's Texas City Refinery.

These are real disasters with real consequences for workers and communities.

At the same time, the facts and record are clear: These disasters are preventable and Congress can and should do something to address them.

The bill also undermines a series of laws intended to ensure that we are good stewards of our natural resources—including the National Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, and Clean Water Act. Ensuring compliance with these laws protects public health,

communities, and the environment. These environmental reviews are also necessary to avoid costly and time-consuming litigation for all parties.

More than that, this is a matter of ensuring that the resources we have can be utilized responsibly to support jobs and economic growth in industries other than drilling, like tourism for example.

The bill also opens huge areas on the East Coast, stretching from Maine to South Carolina, off of Southern California, in the Alaska Arctic and in the area around the important fishery of Bristol Bay off Alaska. Opening these areas ignores concerns raised by nearly every stakeholder other than oil and gas companies.

These include significant issues raised by states and local communities, concerns about important fishing areas, and even concerns raised by our military will go unheeded if this bill were to become law.

Finally, H.R. 6082 would require that the Department of Interior conduct a single multi-sale Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Atlantic, Pacific and Bristol Bay. Combined EIS documents are usually done for lease sales in areas where the conditions are well known and similar. However, these are three wildly different environments that merit their own considerations.

Just to be clear, those who stand to lose under this bill include: states, localities, fisherman, the military, average citizens and small businesses that currently rely on these areas for recreation, tourism, and other purposes.

The winners under this bill: the oil and gas drilling industry.

Hawaii is a case study for why we must end our reliance on fossil fuels and work harder to support the development of a broad range of clean, renewable, locally-produced fuels. Drilling more won't decrease the global competition for oil, and it won't do anything to reduce energy prices in the long-term. High energy prices act as a tax on all of us and an anchor on our economy, so if we are truly going to have the most competitive economy in the 21st century we need to develop affordable alternatives. Developing these alternatives will give the U.S. the upper hand both in terms of costs to our economy, and in developing new industries that can create jobs for the next century.

Instead, the bill before us keeps us on the same path of dependence we've been on. This bill is a failure for our economy in the long term, fails to address the safety reforms for offshore drilling that numerous experts have advocated for, and seeks to give oil companies another windfall without ensuring that they are paying their fair share to drill on public lands.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this terribly shortsighted and ill-advised legislation.

SUPPORTING A MOMENT OF SILENCE DURING THE 2012 OLYMPIC OPENING DAY TO COMMEMORATE THOSE KILLED IN THE MURKIN MASSACRE

**HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, July 25, 2012*

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of Amb. Ido Aharoni, Consul General of Israel