

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

OFFSHORE DRILLING

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, President Trump, in his attempt to deflect focus from the 100-day performance in his administration is, today, throwing a Hail Mary pass to try to allow offshore oil and natural gas drilling to take place in very protected areas of our Outer Continental Shelf.

The President's approach is unlawful and should be withdrawn before taxpayers pay any amount of money to go forward with it. He is attempting to open up coastal areas to oil and gas production, and he is touting job creation as a factor in his decision. I believe that the economic numbers revealed today show that we need to be doing more, but I doubt that this approach will be a successful approach for more American jobs.

The truth is that instead of creating new jobs, President Trump is poised to favor sectors that will compete with the already growing and thriving industries of fishing, tourism, and recreation, and in some potential areas will also threaten defense issues where we could have a potential conflict.

The bottom line is that the BP *Deepwater Horizon* explosion and subsequent oil spill was a catastrophic human, economic and ecological disaster. Eleven members of the crew were killed in the explosion, and 17 others were injured. Oil spewed in the ocean for nearly 3 months, resulting in the largest oil spill disaster in the history of the United States.

In the end, the BP *Horizon* disaster resulted in 134 million gallons of oil spilled into the Gulf of Mexico; that is 12 times more than the *Exxon Valdez* tanker spill in 1989 in Alaska.

I should say that many attempts have been made by Democrats in Congress to make sure we continue to update our laws. But Republicans have repeatedly blocked legislation that would hold polluters liable for oil spills and improve offshore safety and environmental responses.

So today it is very frustrating that the President of the United States is proposing to roll back the important safety regulations that were put in place during the Obama administration. In fact, this book right here shows the *Deepwater Horizon* impact that was discussed by Members of Congress, the problems we had at the Department of Interior, and asked that these new regulations be put in place.

These regulations by the Obama administration helped put a new regime into place after *Deepwater Horizon*. But

now President Trump is bringing those regulations into question, suggesting that we should roll them back. He is even questioning the new regulations on blowout preventer systems and well control, which, if my colleagues will remember, was the centerpiece of the problem with *Deepwater Horizon*.

The blowout preventers used had not been tested; the information was not overseen and regulated properly. So after all of that damage was outlined in this report and we made sure to implement changes, now President Trump, in his first 100 days as the President of the United States, instead of coming up with a better economic strategy is simply saying: Roll back regulations on polluters as a strategy for moving forward.

President Obama had also put large portions of the Arctic and dozens of underwater canyons off the east coast permanently off limits to drilling during his time in office, using his authority under the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act. In the finalized Offshore Oil and Gas Leasing Program for 2017–2022, the Obama administration removed the west coast, east coast, and Arctic waters from oil and gas exploration.

Why did he do that? He did that primarily because of the maritime economy. In Washington State alone, the maritime economy supports 148,000 jobs and \$30 billion in economic activity. Many of these parts of the United States could not afford to be devastated again by oil spills or exploration into ecologically sensitive areas like the Arctic.

I believe the Atlantic region was rightly removed due to strong local opposition, conflicts with other ocean uses, and market dynamics. The Department of the Interior recognized the potential environmental and economic impacts and competing ocean uses. For example, the economic value of commercial fishing in just the Mid-Atlantic region is worth more than \$1.5 billion, and ocean-dependent tourism is more than \$10 billion in the Atlantic region.

So I would say that the fishing economy, the tourism economy, and DOD's need for sea lanes in the Atlantic are all important, and we should not be trying to roll back Obama administration regulations in these areas. It is not surprising that there was significant opposition to the oil and gas leasing from citizens, local officials, and people who reside in these communities.

I can tell you, if this rule includes the west coast, there will be strong opposition from the State of Washington, the State of California, and the State of Oregon, where we are so dependent on healthy oceans and sustainable fisheries. We hope to clarify whether or not the west coast will be included in President Trump's executive order, but if it is, the west coast will speak loudly. From our shellfish growers to our vibrant commercial and recreational fisheries, and generations of families

who have to have sustainably harvested Dungeness crab, salmon, and halibut.

We do not want to put them at risk with offshore drilling. Not only would a spill impact our fisheries and habitat, but it could impact our Olympic National Marine Sanctuary. It would also have an impact on one of the busiest shipping lanes in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, in and out of Washington's busy, busy ports.

Washington's coast is a trade super-highway. Our shipping and trade economy is growing faster than ever. In the first quarter of this year, the total domestic and international container volume increased by 10 percent. In our State, this maritime economy is worth \$30 billion in economic activity. It supports over 148,000 jobs, in fishing, in seafood processing, in shipbuilding, and other maritime sectors.

Because of this importance, we believe in protecting the west coast. President George H.W. Bush signed the first Executive order banning offshore drilling in the Pacific in 1990. We would recommend that this President follow suit.

It is so unfortunate that this new effort to repeal protections is going forward, but I believe it is going to fail. Many know that this action is just an attempt to reverse the past President's withdrawal of sensitive areas, like in the Arctic and the Atlantic, and is not authorized. It is not authorized under the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, and, therefore, the President should not spend money. He should go back to the people who know the law and understand that this is a waste of taxpayer dollars.

I hope the President will dialogue with Congress about any of our ideas to stimulate our economy. I am happy to talk at any point in time about ideas that we have that will move our country forward, produce jobs, and help stimulate economic growth.

But expanding offshore drilling and exploration to areas that already have been limited and set aside by past Presidents is not the way to proceed. We need to make sure that an industry that has made mistakes is held accountable and recommendations that were in this report not be reversed back to the days before *Deepwater Horizon*. This is what we need to do to protect our vital maritime economy and make sure there are laws on the books that the oil and gas industry need to comply with.

I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY,
MAY 1, 2017, AT 3 P.M.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 3 p.m. on Monday.