

tempore (Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio) at 4 p.m.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill, H.R. 1229.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Colorado?

There was no objection.

PUTTING THE GULF OF MEXICO BACK TO WORK ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 245 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 1229.

□ 1601

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 1229) to amend the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act to facilitate the safe and timely production of American energy resources from the Gulf of Mexico, with Mr. WOMACK in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from Colorado (Mr. LAMBORN) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Colorado.

Mr. LAMBORN. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, families and businesses across the country are struggling with skyrocketing gasoline prices that in many places have already passed \$4 per gallon. Everyday activities, such as commuting to work or taking the kids to soccer practice, have strained family budgets, forcing Americans to make tough choices and sacrifices. Unfortunately, rising gasoline prices are not the only energy crisis currently hurting our country. For over a year, communities along the Gulf of Mexico have suffered through a real and then de facto moratorium on offshore drilling imposed by the Obama administration. The administration's intentional slow-walking of drilling permits has cost 12,000 jobs according to their own estimates. According to economist Dr. Joseph Mason, this could cost over 36,000 jobs nationwide if businesses and their employees are not allowed to return to work soon. Over the past month, the Natural Resources Committee has heard from numerous small businesses in Louisiana that have had to lay off hundreds of people, eliminate benefits and diminish their savings just to try to stay afloat.

The bill being considered by the House today will help address all of these concerns. It will put the people and businesses along the gulf back to work by requiring the administration to act on new drilling permits in a timely manner. For Americans across the country who are suffering from rising gasoline prices, this bill acts now to expand American production to help lower costs. H.R. 1229, the Putting the Gulf Back to Work Act, sets a firm time line for the Secretary of the Interior to act on permits. Let me be very clear. Action does not necessarily mean approval. Action simply means that the Secretary must make a decision either to approve or to deny a permit. The bill gives the Secretary 30 days to act, along with two 15-day extensions. This 30-day time frame is consistent with the time line for approving exploration plans, which are far more complicated. A deadline is necessary in order to stop the endless bureaucratic delays and inaction that are currently taking place and to provide companies with some certainty.

There are over 50 permitted projects in the Gulf of Mexico that were under way when the Obama administration imposed the moratorium in May 2010. Nearly a year later, over 40 of those same 50 projects have yet to resume work. This bill would give the Secretary 30 days to restart these projects that have already been approved.

I want to stress that H.R. 1229 will have an immediate impact on jobs and energy production. Each drilling platform supports 800 to 1,400 jobs. Each permit that is issued translates into several hundred people returning to work. In addition, there are production wells just waiting for permits to resume work, meaning that more American energy could come online within months of a permit being issued. Perhaps most importantly, H.R. 1229 also makes significant safety improvements. U.S. offshore drilling helps create American energy and American jobs, but it must be done in a safe and responsible manner.

The bill reforms current law by requiring a drilling company to obtain a permit to drill from the Secretary. Currently, such a permit is not required by law, only by regulation. The bill further reforms the law by requiring the Secretary to conduct a safety review. The bill ensures that all proposed drilling operations must, quote, meet all critical safety system requirements, including blowout prevention, and oil spill response and containment requirements.

Finally, this bill establishes an expedited judicial review process for resolving lawsuits relating to gulf permits. This reform ensures that ending the de facto moratorium imposed by the Obama administration isn't replaced by paralyzing and frivolous lawsuits that could take years to resolve.

What we will see today during the course of this debate are two very different approaches to America's energy

future. Republicans are pursuing an all-of-the-above energy approach to American energy production to create jobs, generate revenue, lower gasoline prices, and strengthen our national security. The Obama administration and congressional Democrats, on the other hand, want to make energy more expensive. Their agenda is to raise taxes to make energy production more difficult and costly. We saw proof of this last Congress when they did everything they could to push through the job-destroying Waxman-Markey national energy tax. Now they are trying to increase taxes on American energy producers.

While Americans are looking for solutions to lower gasoline prices, the Democrats' proposals would increase prices even higher. How in the world higher prices and taxes on energy would help Americans at the gas pump is beyond me.

It's time for Congress to take steps to end the economic pain in the gulf by allowing people to return to work. It's time to ease the pain of high gasoline prices by expanding American energy production. I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation to create jobs, to lower prices, including the price of gas at the pump, and to strengthen our national security.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

I rise in strong opposition to H.R. 1229. Need I remind the Members of this body that 1 year and 19 days ago, the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded, killing 11 workers and creating economic and environmental havoc. For 87 days following the explosion, more than 4 million barrels of oil spewed from the blown-out Macondo well, coating nearly 1,000 miles of gulf coastline and temporarily closing over 88 square miles of some of the Nation's most productive fishing grounds. Yet this Congress has not enacted a single legislative reform to improve the safety of offshore drilling. Instead, the majority now brings forward in the name of spurious claims a bill to encourage more domestic offshore drilling without applying the lessons learned from the gulf blowout. With the spurious claim that more domestic offshore drilling will lower gas prices, they claim that we have to grease the skids, we have to open the doors, we have to give further breaks to the oil companies.

□ 1610

Now, sadly, it seems their motto is "Ignore the spill. Drill, baby, drill."

Frankly, the majority's trio of offshore drilling bills were written as though the Deepwater Horizon disaster had never occurred. That's why I refer to them as the "amnesia acts." Collectively, they will make offshore drilling less safe while opening up vast new swaths of our coastlines without adding any new safety requirements or environmental safeguards on the oil and gas industry.

So today we are taking up the second “amnesia act.” H.R. 1229 would impose artificial and arbitrary deadlines on the Department of the Interior to approve permits to drill. Specifically, this legislation would require the Department to act on a permit to drill within 30 days. After 60 days, whether or not—whether or not, let me emphasize that—the safety and environmental review has been completed by the Interior Department, the drilling application would be deemed approved.

Need I remind my colleagues, Mr. Chairman, that offshore drilling in U.S. waters was determined by the spill commission, the bipartisan, independent spill commission, to be four times more deadly than in other parts of the world prior to the Deepwater Horizon tragedy. It was four times more deadly to drill in the gulf by the same companies than to drill, for example, in the North Sea, hardly a comfortable environment. Now, under this bill, we could actually have less careful oversight and review of offshore drilling than we had before the Deepwater Horizon disaster.

This bill is a dangerous solution in search of a really nonexistent problem. Since the implementation of new safety and environmental standards in June of last year, the Department has added staff, improved its review, and has issued 52 shallow water drilling permits. Only six more permits currently are pending. Since the oil industry demonstrated the capability to contain a deepwater blowout in mid-February, we think, the Department has issued permits for 13 new deepwater wells. There are only 12 permits in the queue for approval; yet the majority is claiming we’ve got to grease the skids, that we’ve got to remove any impediments for the oil companies, that we have to “drill, baby, drill.”

Ironically, the enactment of H.R. 1229 could halt this progress. This bill could hamper new permits being issued or stop new permits altogether because the Department might be forced to deny permits if the safety and environmental reviews are not completed in the arbitrary 60 days.

Moreover, Mr. Chairman, this legislation would issue a blanket extension of existing leases. In contrast to this across-the-board approach, the Department is working on a case-by-case basis to extend existing leases affected by the temporary suspension of new drilling, where such action is warranted, not on a blanket basis but on the basis of the actual facts, of the actual evidence. H.R. 1229 would give a free ride to companies even if their leases are many years from expiring.

With regard to the comment that has been made already in this debate, that this is about prices at the gasoline pump, need I remind my colleagues—now, this was under the George Bush administration—that in 2008, the Energy Information Administration said, if all drilling over the entire east coast Continental Shelf were opened up, the

effect on oil prices would be “insignificant.”

H.R. 1229 also contains language designed to close the doors of the courthouse to citizens who believe that the Federal Government is not complying with the law. Imagine that. Citizens who are trying to be diligent citizens would not be able to make sure that the law is being applied. Citizens from Florida or Alabama would be forced to bring any lawsuits regarding energy projects in the Gulf of Mexico to Louisiana or Texas courts. In addition, H.R. 1229 contains language that would prevent attorneys’ fees from being awarded in successful cases—a deterrent if I’ve ever heard of one. These provisions are aimed at environmental plaintiffs, but will almost certainly impair the legal rights of many other potential plaintiffs, including other oil and gas companies.

In the wake of the Deepwater Horizon disaster, the principles guiding offshore drilling should be smart and safe. If H.R. 1229 is enacted, the guiding principles will be fast and loose. This is the wrong response to the largest oil spill in U.S. waters. We should not rush to allow drilling permits to be deemed approved without the appropriate safety and environmental checks. We should not provide blanket extensions to existing leases. We should not close the doors of the courthouse to American citizens. We should not pass this bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to a new member of the Natural Resources Committee, a member who is jumping in and making an immediate impact on the need for increasing our energy production, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. JOHNSON).

Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio. Mr. Chairman, today we are taking up the Putting the Gulf of Mexico Back to Work Act, which will accomplish two very important goals: create jobs and help lower energy costs. It will end the Obama administration’s de facto drilling moratorium in the gulf in a way that is safe, transparent, and responsible.

A study from Louisiana State University predicted that keeping this moratorium in place for 18 months could cause the loss of more than 36,000 jobs nationwide. We simply can’t afford the Obama administration’s job-killing policies. Rather than putting Americans back to work, they’re seriously impacting America’s energy production. The “March 2011 Short-Term Energy Outlook” from the Energy Information Administration noted that production from the Gulf of Mexico is expected to fall by 240,000 barrels per day this year.

If we’re going to become energy secure, we need to increase our energy production, not limit it; and we need to commit ourselves to developing our own resources. The Putting the Gulf of Mexico Back to Work Act will help do that.

Mr. HOLT. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to a Member who is doing an excellent job of pointing out the need for bringing jobs and production back online in Louisiana and in the gulf, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. FLEMING).

Mr. FLEMING. I thank the gentleman for allowing me to speak on this important issue, H.R. 1229.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, it is one of a trifecta of bills that we’re passing out of the House, once and for all and after 40 years, to begin actually putting together a cogent energy policy for this country. Now, before I talk about it, I do want to make a couple of comments.

Our President has been saying over and over again that our energy production, our oil production is at the highest level it has ever been. ED MARKEY, the ranking member of the committee said the same thing. Mr. Salazar of Interior, Mr. Bromwich just the other day, and Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ said the same thing.

Why are you saying this?

Very clearly, right now we are producing oil at a level of 6 million barrels a day, down from a high in 1972 of 9 million barrels a day; and off the gulf coast, where you claim that production is its highest ever, we were down from 1.7 million barrels a day last year to 1.59 million today, and it will be going down by another 225,000 barrels of oil per day by next year.

For heaven’s sake, there’s a reason we have a structural increase in the cost of our energy. It is, very simply, that we’re constraining the output of oil. So let’s get on it. Let’s finally start producing oil in this country, and let’s become energy independent once and for all.

Louisiana is being hurt in two ways. Number one, of course, is the increasing price of gasoline; but it’s also jobs. As the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. JOHNSON) just mentioned, Dr. Joseph Mason from Louisiana State University, from my home State, said that we’re looking at a loss of 36,137 jobs over an 18-month period out of the gulf coast alone. In February, Seahawk Drilling, which owned and operated 20 rigs on the gulf coast, filed chapter 11 due to the Obama administration’s de facto moratorium.

□ 1620

The CHAIR. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. LAMBORN. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. FLEMING. I thank the gentleman.

We have lost 12 rigs so far to such countries as Nigeria, Egypt, the Congo, and Brazil, and guess who we just gave \$2 billion to drill oil? Brazil, of all places. So we gave them the rig, we gave them the money so they can drill oil to sell back to us and to put tax money into their coffers. For heaven’s sake, this is crazy.

So in conclusion, I'd like to say today, let's get our Louisiana and Texas and other people back to work. Let's invest in our energy across this country, and let's get the gas prices down.

Mr. HOLT. The gentleman used the term "trifecta." It's a curious selection of words because, indeed, you could see the oil companies right now lining up at the ticket window to cash in their trifecta winnings if this goes forward.

The oil companies are currently sitting on 60 million acres of public land onshore and offshore in which they are not producing. The oil industry is sitting on more than 11.5 billion barrels of oil, nearly as much as they could ever get from drilling up and down the east coast and the west coast. This is where they should be directing their attention, but instead, where are they directing their attention as they bring in profits that for this year looked to be something like \$100 billion? They are using those profits not to provide more resources for the American people but to buy back stock. Exxon, which had about a \$10 billion profit in the first quarter of this year, just the first three months, used most of its money, more than half of it, to buy back stock.

So it is curious that my colleague used the phrase "trifecta" because, indeed, this is a bonanza, a big winning ticket for the Big Oil companies.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Chairman, at this point I would like to yield 1 minute to a new member of the committee who represents a district right on the gulf coast and is passionate about what is happening and not happening down there and what should be happening, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. LANDRY).

Mr. LANDRY. Mr. Chairman, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle should listen to this story. It's a true life story very well. It talks about the face of Big Oil, and I'm going to tell you what it is.

There's a little community in my district named Coteau Holmes which has been around since the Cajuns were kicked out of Acadian and settled down into Louisiana. It's a fishing village. There's a gentleman down there who graduated high school in 1968 and began to work in the oil and gas industry, and for 30 years, he worked in the oil and gas industry. He raised two children in that oil and gas industry, never asked the government for anything other than to ply his trade.

The experience he gained in the Gulf of Mexico led him to work on the first Deepwater projects in the Gulf of Mexico. He worked for Shell Oil and Gas—Big Oil—and guess what. When he retired, he was making in excess of \$1,750 a day. He put two kids through college.

The CHAIR. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. LAMBORN. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. LANDRY. If this is not the American Dream that my colleagues

on the other side of the aisle claim to tout so much, what is? This is a gentleman who doesn't have a college education. Who actually his children were the first generation in his entire family ancestry to ever make it to college, and he could not have paid for them to go to college if not for the opportunity to drill in the Gulf of Mexico.

My colleagues should understand that down there we create jobs. We create good-paying jobs, not minimum-wage jobs, the type of jobs that provide for the American family and allow the American Dream to be a reality.

Mr. HOLT. We are indeed concerned about jobs. For the example that my friend from Louisiana gives about someone whose livelihood is at stake, I could produce dozens of others, maybe a shrimp fisherman. You know, my friends maybe remember the "Forrest Gump" movie. They've seen those pictures. In fact, my friend from Louisiana probably has been out on one of those shrimp boats. Well, they were sitting idle. They were sitting idle for weeks and weeks.

The breeding grounds, the fisheries, were and still are in jeopardy. People all over the country are not buying the fish that drank of this black gold. In fact, 88,000 square miles, as I said earlier, of fisheries were polluted by this tremendous spill, and need I remind my colleagues that the coastal communities of the Gulf of Mexico, the heart of offshore drilling, that the jobs that are dependent on tourism and fishing exceed all the natural resource extraction and mining jobs by a factor of five, five times as many jobs dependent on tourism and fisheries.

Yes, we should learn the lesson, rather than hurrying through these permits. We should learn the lessons of last year's oil spill and protect those jobs.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Arizona, who's a new member of the committee and understands these issues well, Mr. GOSAR.

(Mr. GOSAR asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GOSAR. Mr. Chairman, the people in my district are hurting. Rising gas prices are cutting deep into family budgets. Food prices are skyrocketing. Communities that are home to destination locations like the Grand Canyon are bracing themselves for fewer summer visitors because families simply cannot afford to travel.

Main Street America can no longer afford inaction from the President and his administration, and that is why I stand here today in support of H.R. 1229. The bill not only will put thousands of Americans back to work, it would increase our production of oil here at home and lower the cost of gas.

It is time we put our country back to work and use our resources here at home instead of abroad, and it is time the government makes a serious com-

mitment towards energy independence and an all-of-the-above approach that America wants.

Mr. HOLT. I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentlelady from Santa Barbara, California (Mrs. CAPPS), who has experienced firsthand the economic cost of oil spills.

Mrs. CAPPS. I thank my colleague from New Jersey for recognizing me.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong opposition to H.R. 1229. A year ago BP's Deepwater Horizon rig exploded in the Gulf of Mexico, leaving 11 people dead and over 1,000 miles of shoreline oiled. It also left the local economy in shambles. The once lucrative fishing and tourism businesses were devastated by this spill. Many gulf residents are still struggling, and yet the oil industry would have us believe it suffered greatly during the temporary moratorium on new drilling. The fact is the gulf produced 1.6 million barrels of oil per day last year, an all-time record, and still the industry is clamoring for more.

Today, we're considering another bill on their wish list that sidesteps safety and environmental safeguards. H.R. 1229 forces this administration to unreasonably rush the permitting process for drilling activities. These permits are a final review opportunity for the Federal Government to ensure that everything is in place before an oil company drills deep into our ocean floor, but the majority is using the strain of high gas prices to push Americans into thinking that drilling is safe and that hurrying these permits will bring down costs.

□ 1630

It's as if we learned nothing from the BP oil disaster. Mr. Chairman, we cannot say drilling is safe when Congress has not taken necessary steps to strengthen protections for rig workers and the environment. We cannot say drilling is safe when the industry has yet to prove it has better means of preventing or cleaning up a spill than we saw that it did a year ago, and we cannot say drilling is safe when the government lacks the resources it needs to police an industry that for years policed itself, to perilous ends.

While the Obama administration has started acting on the lessons of the spill, Michael Bromwich, the head offshore drilling regulator, told the New York Times that his agency "still lacks the resources, personnel, training, technology, enforcement tools, regulations, and legislation that it needs to do its job properly."

Mr. Chairman, we know how to reduce the risk of oil spills. The President's oil spill commission laid out a list of recommendations for how Congress can prevent another spill from occurring. Many of my colleagues have amendments to put those recommendations in place. I hope this House will adopt them so we can say that drilling is safer.

Vote "no" on H.R. 1229. Let's not promote reckless drilling that will fail to

lower gas prices and endanger our coastlines. Let's instead strengthen safety and environmental safeguards for offshore drilling and support a quicker transition to cleaner, safer energy policy for America.

Mr. LAMBORN. I would like to inquire of the Chair how much time is remaining for both sides.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Colorado has 18 minutes remaining, and the gentleman from New Jersey has 16 minutes remaining.

Mr. LAMBORN. Then I would like to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCLINTOCK).

Mr. MCCLINTOCK. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Chairman, when I was listening to the gentlelady from California and her colleagues, I was reminded of Mark Twain's warning that we should be careful to get out of an experience only the wisdom that is there and then stop, lest we be like the cat that sits on a hot stove lid. That cat will not sit on a hot stove lid again—and this is good—but, also, it will not sit on a cold stove lid again.

The cost of the irrational reaction by this administration to what was, in essence, a mechanical failure of a blowout preventer is horrific, as measured in unemployed families, higher energy prices, lost business to shops throughout the region, and lost royalties to the Nation's Treasury. It is said that the economic damage done by this administration in response to the oil spill could be far greater than that done by the oil spill itself, and I believe it. I would suggest a little common sense will go a long way, and this bill provides it.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Chairman, earlier the gentleman mentioned Brazil. The bill before us would grant a blanket extension for leases in the gulf that are about to expire. And according to the Interior Department, this amendment would extend about 100 leases and costs about \$6 million over 10 years. Well, 12 of those leases that would be extended automatically belong to Petrobras, the Brazilian oil giant. It would, indeed, provide a windfall given from American taxpayers to the State-owned Brazilian oil giant Petrobras. Yes, this bill in front of us now.

I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida, Representative CASTOR, who, unlike some of the debaters today, is someone who actually lives on the Gulf of Mexico.

Ms. CASTOR of Florida. I thank my colleague for yielding time.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong opposition to H.R. 1229.

This Republican proposal is very poor public policy. And as a Member who represents a community that is dependent on the gulf coast's economy, frankly, it is appalling for my Republican friends to press to eliminate safety standards on oil companies who want to continue to drill and come closer and closer to our beautiful beaches. Really, it is beyond the pale.

And I have to ask, did my colleagues not learn anything from this disaster?

In our economy on Florida's gulf coast, we depend on clean water and clean beaches, and when you bring up a bill like this, it feels like a direct challenge to our economic recovery. We have not recovered. The hotels and motels on the beach, the seafood industry, all the mom and pop shops who are dependent on the tourism industry, we are still struggling to come back. We want to adopt the recommendations of the oil spill commission that recommends stronger safety standards, something like that which was passed on a bipartisan basis here in the House last year.

Now to add insult to injury, my Republican colleagues recently passed a budget that gives taxpayer subsidies to the Big Oil companies. In the face of a burgeoning debt and deficit and in the face of huge profits by the oil companies, why should the American taxpayers be subsidizing the bottom line of the most profitable corporations in the world? Instead, it is time for a meaningful, comprehensive energy strategy to lower gas prices because it appears that that's what we all are in agreement to do. But to do that, it's not to eliminate safety standards for drilling. That's silly. What we should do is end the giveaways to Big Oil, eliminate the \$5 billion in subsidies and loopholes that the oil companies receive each year. Let's prohibit Wall Street speculators from artificially driving up oil prices. Let's develop super-efficient cars and clean alternative energies that will create good jobs in America and then bring down gas prices.

Mr. Chairman, finally, I caution the oil companies and their friends in Congress that the BP Deepwater Horizon blowout was only 1 year ago. Most of the necessary safety standards and recommendations of the bipartisan oil spill commission have not been adopted. No one should be pressing for unbridled drilling without ensuring that another blowout disaster would never happen again. Otherwise, many of us on the gulf coast view the blind-eyed push as a serious threat to our multi-billion dollar tourism and fishing industries and our coastal environmental resources.

Florida's long-term economic health is dependent on clean water and clean beaches and clean oceans. Our economy is struggling right now. I am confident that Florida's economy will recover, but Florida's long-term economic outlook will suffer immensely if we have to suffer through another blowout disaster.

Mr. Chairman, we need an honest dialogue on energy solutions based on facts. Americans are clamoring for comprehensive long-term energy solutions so we are less dependent on foreign oil.

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Chairman, I would like to point out that anyone who reads the bill will see on the bot-

tom of page 1 and the top of page 2, "Safety review required. The Secretary shall not issue a permit under paragraph one without ensuring that the proposed drilling operations meet all, A, critical safety system requirements, including blowout prevention; and B, oil spill response and containment requirements."

So when we look at the facts, we should start with the text of the bill itself.

At this point, I would like to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from the State of Louisiana (Mr. FLEMING).

Mr. FLEMING. I thank the gentleman.

I wanted to respond to a couple of things from the other side. First of all, Mr. LANDRY and I are both from Louisiana. We are not potted plants. We are actually from a State that is on the coast. In fact, Mr. LANDRY lives, actually, on the coast. So I think we speak from experience and knowledge on that.

With respect to seafood, yes, there is a problem with the seafood. It's a perception problem. Seafood in Louisiana is the safest seafood in the world. We have just got to get that message out to the American people.

Let's talk about subsidies. We hear about subsidies. Well, you know there is a profiteer when it comes to oil: 36 to 63 cents per gallon is swept off the top. And who profits from that? The government profits from it. And what does the government do with much of that money? It puts it into so-called alternative energy with so-called phony green jobs that we are yet to see being produced, wind and solar, et cetera.

The CHAIR. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. LAMBORN. I yield the gentleman an additional 15 seconds.

Mr. FLEMING. Now, it's also been suggested, Well, perhaps we should punish these evil oil companies by taxing them. Mr. Chairman, who pays the taxes? It's the consumers. It's the American people. You add a 10 percent tax to oil exploration or gasoline or whatever, and it's us, it's we—we are the ones who will have to pay that, not the oil companies.

□ 1640

Like any company, they pass these costs along to the consumer. So I want to see gas prices go down, not up, like the other side.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Chairman, I am now pleased to yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), the ranking member on the full committee, and someone who has done as much as anyone in this body to create green jobs in America over the decades.

Mr. MARKEY. I thank the gentleman from New Jersey very much, and I thank him for his leadership on these issues. We're partners in this effort to try to move toward a new energy direction.

So last week we had a debate on the issue of whether or not the \$4 billion

that the oil industry gets in tax breaks per year from the American consumer should be taken away at this time when ExxonMobil reported \$10 billion worth of profits in the first quarter, that is just January, February and March. Shell reported \$8.8 billion; BP, \$7.1 billion; Chevron, \$6.2 billion; ConocoPhillips, \$3 billion. That's in the first 3 months of this year.

But you know what the argument is, from the Republican side, is that they would be punished if the consumer, if the taxpayer didn't also give them an additional \$4 billion in tax breaks.

So let's just look at this chart. This is how much they made as people are pulling up to the pump paying \$3.80, \$4, \$4.20 all across America. Now, you know what the oil companies could do? They could say, You know what? I think we made too much. I think what we should do in the first quarter is just lower the price at the pump so we don't make so much. Maybe we don't have to have the consumer paying \$4 a gallon. Maybe we, ExxonMobil, maybe we could have made 9.7. Maybe Shell could have made 7.8, maybe BP could have made only \$6.1 billion, maybe Chevron could have made only \$5.2 billion. In other words, maybe they each could have made \$1 billion less, and that would be \$4 billion in the first quarter.

But, no. They decide that if the war in Libya is going to take 1.2 million barrels of oil off the market, if the Saudi Arabians are going to take 800,000 barrels of oil off the market, that that's a free market. And so if the price goes up to skyrocketing heights, we have a right to take all that extra money out of the consumers' pockets. That's the free market. The war in Libya is a free market. Saudi Arabia taking 800,000 barrels off the market, that's a free market.

Now, the American consumer, they look at it and they say that's not a free market. The American taxpayers, they look at it and they say that's not the free market. We're sending over more bombers. We're sending over more troops. We're adding more to the defense budget of the country. Why would we do that? What does that have to do with the free market? What does this increase in defense expenditures and the number of young men and women that we send over to the Middle East to protect this cordon of oil tankers coming into the United States have to do with the free market?

But nonetheless, that's the argument of the Republicans and, by the way, of ExxonMobil and Shell and BP. They deserve these profits, they say, just for 3 months.

By the way, you can multiply each one of these numbers by at least four, at least the next three quarters of 2011 as well, and project ExxonMobil making \$40 billion this year and Shell 34 or \$35 billion, et cetera, et cetera.

But the Republicans say they still need the extra \$4 billion from the taxpayer pocket. So they dip into one pocket, the consuming pocket, and

they tip the consumer upside down, and they take all this money out of their pockets. And you don't see any restraint on the part of the oil companies taking advantage of the war in Libya. And then they want to dip into the other pocket of the consumer, the consumer as a taxpayer, and then they say you can't take away those tax breaks either.

So that's a very interesting position to have to defend at this point in time, especially since they're saying that they want to cut back on the benefits for Grandma on Medicare. They want to cut back the budget by 70 percent on wind and solar, on geothermal and biomass. They want to cut back the budget to help Grandma stay in a nursing home with Alzheimer's.

But one thing you should never touch, and that's the \$4 billion for ExxonMobil, Shell and BP from the taxpayers, even as they're reporting the largest profits in the history of the world that any corporation's made.

And now, today, they have the temerity to come out here on the floor and they're looking for more. What this first bill that we're about to consider does is it legislates possible intimidation of Federal safety reviewers and puts a time clock on looking at the most controversial leases.

Now, mind you, just 1 year ago in the Gulf of Mexico we were looking with amazement at the worst single environmental disaster in American history, and that is BP with no idea about how they were going to stop 4 million barrels of oil going into the Gulf of Mexico. They had no idea how to stop it. And the American people, the world was tuned into the spill cam, almost, you know, fixated on this complete lack of safety, complete lack of preparation to protect the life and the livelihoods of the people who live around the Gulf of Mexico.

So what's the response of the Republican Party 1 year later? Is it to pass a safety bill? Is it to implement the recommendations of the BP Spill Commission, this blue ribbon panel of experts that identified that there are systemic failures in the safety precautions built into drilling in the United States? Is it to deal with the fact that they identified that there are four times higher fatalities on American rigs as there are on European rigs drilling off the shores of Europe?

No. All that legislation is stopped dead in its tracks. What they argue is we have got to give, you know, kind of a shot clock. You know how in the NBA, when you're watching TV and you only have 24 seconds to shoot a basketball, and so that creates a real intensity or else you lose the ball? Well, that's kind of what they want to say now to the Department of the Interior. We're putting you on a shot clock. You have 60 days. You have 60 days to decide: Is that drilling rig safe? Have the precautions been put in place to ensure that a catastrophic accident can't happen?

And if you don't make a decision in 60 days, Department of the Interior, on a rig that's out there at 3,000 or 5,000 or 10,000 feet and off the shore miles and miles and you can't figure it out, Department of the Interior—now, mind you, this is the same company that couldn't figure it out a year ago, and they're amongst the wealthiest companies in the world. But if you, the Department of the Interior, if you can't figure out what we can do, we the company can do in 60 days, we get to have the lease and we get to go ahead.

□ 1650

It is kind of like the NBA, except the consequences aren't that your home team loses; it's that your home team loses its job, your home team loses its environment because another catastrophic accident has occurred. That's what they do with this bill. They put a shot clock on it.

So I think if the American people are looking at the absurdity of this situation with these companies, look at the companies that are lobbying for this: ExxonMobil, Shell, BP, Chevron, and ConocoPhillips. These are the companies that 1 year ago said that they could evacuate walrus from the Gulf of Mexico. They had an emergency response plan in the event of a spill. Well, the problem was, of course, that they each had put it in writing; they had each put it in as an application to the Department of the Interior to drill in the Gulf of Mexico. But walrus, as every sixth grade child knows, have not lived in the Gulf of Mexico for 3 million years. So these are the companies that we are now supposed to trust.

Put it on a shot clock, they say. Just let the Department of the Interior try to figure out everything that we are planning for Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Texas.

And, by the way, the way the gulf stream works is pulling a lot of that pollution, if it's bad, in God knows how many directions, and the fish that get exposed to it put into the food chain with endocrine disrupters, cancer-causing agents, potentially harming families. But 60 days is all you have got.

It's kind of like the NBA, when we think that's how oil drilling should be, too, because we trust these companies. They are obviously the most safety conscious companies that this world has ever known, because we can see how really responsible they are in dealing with consumers.

They had a chance not to charge \$4 a gallon because we are having a war in Libya and the Saudi Arabians took 800 barrels off the market, believe it or not, our friends the Saudis, over the last 6 weeks. But now we are just going to pretend that they are really good and responsible companies, and for them, so they can get all the leases that they want, they are on a shot clock—60 days.

Good luck to the Department of the Interior. Good luck to the environment. Good luck to the consumer.

Good luck to the taxpayers if another accident occurs.

So, ladies and gentlemen, we are going to have an incredible debate here on this issue, because these are the same people that just passed the budget that cut the wind and solar budget by 70 percent.

You know, if you are a kid in America and it is 2011 and you are looking at this debate, you're saying to yourself: They cut the solar and wind budget in 2011 by 70 percent, and they are giving the oil companies unlimited profits, unlimited tax breaks, and unlimited access after 60 days to wherever they want to drill off of the coastline? Now, that's an upside-down agenda.

And you have already heard some of the denigrating comments about wind and solar, which does reflect, I hate to say it, a deep-seated attitude about these renewable energy resources. But, you know, politics.

And I think America is all about the future, and the future is about wind. It's about solar. It's about moving to all electric vehicles. It's about the agenda that they just pretty much defunded in their budget that they had the votes here on the House floor.

So I would urge that we would defeat this piece of legislation.

And their legislation, they say it's all of the above, but do you want to know what it is? It's oil above all. That is really what it is all about. Give the oil companies everything they want, and slash the budget for renewables. Slash the budget for all the other new technologies that we need to enhance our future.

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Chairman, I would like to inquire how much time is remaining to our side and if any remains on the other side.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Colorado has 15 minutes remaining. The time of the gentleman from New Jersey has expired.

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Chairman, I would like to say, I have been listening very closely and I still haven't heard a clear answer as to how \$4 billion of additional taxes on energy companies will translate into lower costs at the pump. Now, I don't think it can be done, but I haven't even heard a cogent argument to establish that. So I am still listening, and maybe I will hear that later.

At this time, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Louisiana, who lives on and represents a district on the Gulf of Mexico, Mr. LANDRY.

Mr. LANDRY. Mr. Chairman, I do. I live on the coast. I represent most of coastal Louisiana. And what I wonder is, where were my colleagues in 2008? I was not in this body; they were.

They were worried about my shrimpers? In 2008, almost every shrimp boat from Venice to Delcambre was at the dock. Why? Because they had run diesel to just about \$5 a gallon. You see, it takes energy for those shrimpers to go out there on the Gulf of Mexico.

They worry about the tourism in Florida? There are already multiple articles in the paper that say that high gas prices are killing tourism in Florida.

This is a responsibility bill. You see, they want to punish those who make a profit while they give taxpayer money to those who fail, who are too big to fail. They punish the companies who make profits in this country while they give our money to those who fail to make a profit.

It amazes me, because what really matters here, what really creates jobs not only in my district but in everyone else's district is affordable energy. Affordable energy is what powers the U.S. economy.

If they want to bring the profits of those four Big Oil companies down, they should vote for this bill. Because when we drive the price of oil down and when we drive the price at the pump down, we are going to drive those profits down and we are going to take away our dependency on those foreign countries that are making way more profits than those private companies.

So I urge my colleagues to remember that the responsible thing to do is to vote for this bill so that we can bring the price at the pump down.

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Chairman, I would like to address the issue of safety that has been raised a couple of times here.

I quoted from the bill text earlier to show that there, indeed, are safety requirements that have been put into the bill as part of H.R. 1229:

The Secretary will not issue a permit unless critical safety system requirements, including blowout prevention and oil spill response and containment requirements, have been satisfied.

At this point, Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to another gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. SCALISE).

Mr. SCALISE. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate my colleague yielding to talk about this important legislation; because, Mr. Chairman, as I just got back home from New Orleans over the weekend, of course people all throughout the gulf coast, people all throughout the country are frustrated and angry about the high gas prices we are paying at the pump.

In south Louisiana you don't need to look any further than the area that I represent to see the devastating impact of this administration's policies, not only on high gas prices but also on jobs.

We have lost over 13,000 jobs in south Louisiana just because of this administration's refusal to let our people go back to work, people that were drilling safely, exploring for energy in America, that are literally on the verge of being put out of business because this administration won't let them go back to work where there are known barrels of oil, billions of barrels in some of these areas in the Outer Continental Shelf that are closed off because of this administration.

They say there is no moratorium anymore, but we call it a permitorium, because they don't allow companies to go back to work, hiring people, creating jobs, allowing our country to become energy independent.

If you look at the results of their policies, not only has it yielded higher gas prices at the pump, but for anybody on the other side that suggests that cutting off the supply has nothing to do with the price of oil, they need to go back and take a basic economics course.

I don't think OPEC could have developed a better policy than what they have got right now, because they are saying basically we are not allowing our people to go back to work in the United States, but the President wants to encourage drilling in Brazil. He asked the Saudis to produce more energy. We have got billions of barrels in America, and our people can't even go back to work.

So this legislation at least says, enough of this delay, enough of the foolishness and the games and blaming everybody else while gas prices continue to skyrocket. Prices have more than doubled at the pump since President Obama took the oath of office, and it is his policies that are causing this.

So I am glad that this leadership is bringing legislation to the floor here in the House to finally say we are going to do something about it; we are not going to look the other way. Our plan isn't to raise billions more in taxes so people pay even more at the pump and so we are even more dependent on foreign oil. We are actually going to make America energy independent by saying let's let our people go back to work.

The CHAIR. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. LAMBORN. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. SCALISE. Mr. Chairman, I will conclude by saying this: If you go throughout south Louisiana and you see the 13,000 jobs that we have lost; you talk to families who are hanging on by a vine; you talk to small business owners who barely can make ends meet and they are just struggling to hold on to their business, and all they want to do is go back to work, and this administration is saying "no." But, no, they want to drill in Brazil. They want our people across the country to pay higher gas prices.

There is a better way. There is an answer. There is a solution, and that is in this legislation being brought forward. I urge that my colleagues from across the country vote to lower gas prices and pass this bill.

□ 1700

Mr. LAMBORN. I thank the gentleman and the others from the Natural Resources Committee on the Republican side who have spoken on this issue or are with the Energy and Commerce Committee and made great comments about how we do need to do what

we can in Congress to lower the price of gasoline. We do that by increasing production. The two go together. We don't do it by increasing taxes on the energy producers. We allow for policies to allow for more production.

We have to pass H.R. 1229 to make sure that, whether it is deliberate or not, this administration will not continue to stonewall the permitting process. It is a long and lengthy process. There are multiple environmental reviews that take place. Then to hold it up at the last and not allow for a permit to be issued is just not acceptable. All the work has been done when it becomes time to issue the permit.

So what this bill says is you have 30 days, with a couple of extensions, if necessary, to make the final decision. And you don't have to issue the permit. You can say no, if that is the best decision. Just take action, and let's have a little certainty in the business world and in the economy of our country, especially the Gulf of Mexico and the coastal States like Louisiana that are so heavily affected.

On the issue of safety, Mr. Chairman, we all do share the goal of wanting to make sure that offshore drilling is the safest in the world. Significant and fundamental changes have taken place over the past year to improve offshore drilling safety and response. Regulations have been enhanced and strengthened, standards have been increased, new technology has been developed, reviewed, tested and is being currently deployed.

BOEMRE Director Michael Bromwich came to our committee and testified in front of the Natural Resources Committee and he said, "We have confidence that offshore drilling can be conducted now more safely than it had been before and that we would be better able to deal with a blowout than we were before."

Now, if anyone on the other side of the aisle wants to act as if nothing has been changed and there have been no safety reforms imposed, they are indicting the Obama administration in saying that they have turned a blind eye to the situation since the BP crisis took place, and that is simply not true. As I said a minute ago, new regulations have been imposed and standards have been strengthened. So I am not going to sit here and indict the administration on the safety aspect. There have been a lot of safety regulations by bureaucratic regulation put into place.

This bill does acknowledge that two additional things will be part of our law when this bill passes. H.R. 1229 says, number one, the Secretary will issue a permit. The need for a permit has not been ever codified, so we are requiring that a permit has to be issued before drilling can take place. Number two, the Secretary is to conduct a safety review. That is being mandated and put into law.

Mr. Chairman, I would urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 1229. We are going to be looking at some amendments shortly.

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. Mr. Chair, I rise in strong support of H.R. 1229, the Putting the Gulf Back to Work Act, and I thank Natural Resources Committee Chairman HASTINGS for yielding me time.

At a time when hardworking Georgians are paying \$3.88 per gallon at the pump, it is critically important that we enact commonsense energy production policies to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and create jobs. Unfortunately, the Obama Administration has adopted policies that have stifled energy production in this country, and have led to 12,000 jobs lost during the moratorium imposed in the Gulf of Mexico last year.

Mr. Chair, H.R. 1229 will end the ongoing "de facto" moratorium caused by the White House's refusal to approve permits in the Gulf by requiring the Department of the Interior to grant permits for exploration of oil and natural gas. This commonsense legislation will create thousands of jobs, help recapture \$4.7 million that the Federal Government is losing on a daily basis from a lack of energy production, and will lead us to greater energy independence.

I urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 1229.

Mr. ROTHMAN. Mr. Chair, I rise today to voice my strong opposition to H.R. 1229 and H.R. 1230.

In April 2010, our Nation watched as millions of gallons of oil spilled into the Gulf of Mexico from an oil drilling rig off the coast of Louisiana. We saw photos of the disaster that ensued, the impact on our environment (including the damage caused to marine and coastal wildlife) and the devastating economic impact on communities in the Gulf Coast region. From the loss of fishing jobs and revenue from tourism to the harm of biodiversity in fragile wetland ecosystems and marine life breeding grounds, this oil spill caused immense destruction to a resource rich area.

I am concerned that without changes to the offshore drilling industry standards, a disaster like the Deepwater Horizon explosion of April 2010 could happen again. Today, the majority in the House is asking us to pass H.R. 1229 and to forget about the tragic events of last April and the inadequacies of our national energy policy in order to grant Big Oil access to the Gulf with less oversight—rushing lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico at an unprecedented pace and without proper environmental review. This bill is not only ill-advised, but it is unnecessary as well because the Obama Administration is already moving forward with the lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico with added reviews to ensure sound safety and environmental protections.

In addition, H.R. 1230 would require the Interior Department to hold additional lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico over the next 4 to 8 months and open the eastern seaboard for drilling by requiring a lease sale off the coast of Virginia this year. This bill would require the Interior Department to rely on environmental reviews for these areas done by the Bush Administration prior to the Deepwater Horizon disaster, with many of the same demonstrably flawed and dangerous assumptions and inadequate review processes as the BP lease that led to the disastrous spill in April 2010. The majority in Congress is using rising gasoline prices as an excuse to grant large, multi-national energy companies greater access to even more of our precious shores, including

on the Atlantic Coast which could affect New Jersey in the event of a spill.

I believe opening our coastal waters and protected wilderness areas to oil drilling is harmful, ineffective, and a step in the wrong direction that will damage our environment. We are currently drilling at a higher rate than we ever have and onshore production increased by 5% in 2010. Production in the Gulf of Mexico is at an all time high. Yet, of the 41 million acres of public lands now leased for oil and gas development, just 12 million acres are producing. Offshore, 38 million acres of the outer continental shelf are leased for oil and gas drilling, but just 6.5 million acres are producing. We have approved drilling leases on land where no drilling is taking place; the potential for higher production is there without expanding leasing to environmentally sensitive wildlife refuges or populated shore regions.

Moreover, the proposed drilling will not significantly lower gas prices. According to a 2009 study from the Energy Information Administration, opening up waters that are currently closed to drilling off the East Coast, West Coast and the Gulf coast of Florida would yield an extra 500,000 barrels a day by 2030, meaning that gas prices might drop a total of 3 cents a gallon. And that is years away. In the meantime, Big Oil companies continue to rake in record profits while taxpayers subsidize their costs. The American people have had enough, New Jersey has had enough and I have had enough. We need to stop Big Oil subsidies and explore alternatives.

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIR. All time for general debate has expired.

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. LANDRY) having assumed the chair, Mr. WOMACK, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1229) to amend the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act to facilitate the safe and timely production of American energy resources from the Gulf of Mexico, had come to no resolution thereon.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on the motion to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Any record vote on the postponed question will be taken after 6:30 p.m. today.

ASSESSING PROGRESS IN HAITI ACT

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1016) to measure the progress of relief, recovery, reconstruction, and