



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on July 26, 2012

## House Republicans Reject Obama Plan for Offshore Drilling

Mounting resistance against President Obama's seemingly anti-oil agenda, the Republican-led House passed a bill Wednesday that would displace the administration's new offshore drilling plan. The measure is doomed for failure in the Senate, which has prompted Democrats to blast the attempt as a political maneuver made by disgruntled Republicans who oppose the president's energy policies.



H.R. 6082 would [boost](#) the cap on offshore gas and oil lease sales to 28 for the next five years, an increase from the administration's proposed 15. The Republican bill effectively broadens more Pacific and Atlantic coastal areas to oil exploration, standing in contrast to Obama's plan to bar exploration in those regions; the legislation also would fast-track lease sales in Arctic waters off the Alaskan coast.

Additionally, Republicans offered another bill that rejected the administration's plan, serving as an opportunity to express further discontent over the president's opposition to new fossil fuel production. The House [voted 261-164](#), stringing along a few Democrats, to scrap the administration's plan.

Rep. Doc Hastings (R-Wash.), chairman of the Natural Resources Committee, said the GOP-led measure would provide lawmakers with an alternative to Obama's restrictive oil plan. The White House proposal currently is facing a 60-day congressional review before implementation, and Interior Secretary Ken Salazar says he will sign off on it immediately following the review.

The administration's stance against new oil exploration largely stemmed from BP's Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010, which ignited waves of protest from environmentalists and liberal-leaning groups. Consequently, Congress and the White House have imposed heavy restrictions that bar all drilling in much of the eastern Gulf of Mexico.

Democrats have railed against the GOP bills, portraying them as an arbitrary political stunt intended to spoil the president's energy agenda. "The only reason the majority is bringing up this bill is to defeat it," Rep. Edward Markey (D-Mass.) said previous to the vote that rejected Obama's plan.

Democrats and the White House claim the president's plan still makes 75 percent of recoverable offshore resources open for exploration. However, the measure proposes fewer leases than any other administration since the Jimmy Carter presidency, asserted Rep. Hastings. "Virginia will be left out in the cold" until at least 2017, he affirmed, cheating Americans out of thousands of jobs.

Rep. Rob Bishop (R-Utah) suggested Wednesday that Obama's resistance to new oil production is a political attempt to secure votes and campaign dollars for the November elections. Subsequent delays on the Keystone XL oil pipeline, which is slated to transport Canadian crude to southern parts of the U.S., were allegedly motivated by Obama's desire to appease environmentalists who felt marginalized following the 2008 election.

"It would appear to me that they are playing off special interest groups at the expense of trying to come



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up with a long-term energy program that does all of the above,” Mr. Bishop charged.

*The New American* [reported](#) in June that Obama’s so-called dedication to oil production, which he touted in his 2012 State of the Union address, is highly questionable. The president claims he has pledged to provide “every possible action” to develop “a supply of natural gas that can last America nearly one hundred years.” However, only days after hailing his “dedication” to bolstering U.S. oil supply, Obama issued his proposed 2013 budget, which [according](#) to *Financial Times*, “sets up a fight with the oil and gas industry.”

Furthermore, Obama lauded a March attempt by the U.S. Senate to end billions of dollars in tax breaks for the “big five” oil companies, which includes BP, Exxon, Shell, Chevron, and ConocoPhillips. “I think it’s time they got by without more help from taxpayers who are already having a tough enough time paying the bills and filling up their gas tank,” the president [said](#) at the time. “And I think it’s curious that some folks in Congress, who are the first to belittle investments in new sources of energy, are the ones that are fighting the hardest to maintain these giveaways for the oil companies.”

Following his anti-oil theme, Obama expressed staunch opposition against the Republicans’ July 25 efforts to expand U.S. oil production, promising a veto to any bill that moves beyond his proposed legislation. Insofar as its political implications, critics say the president’s initiative to keep the oil industry highly regulated could backfire, as persistently high gas prices may shift voters to the other side of the political aisle.

*Photo: [Offshore Jack Up Drilling Rig](#) via Shutterstock*



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