



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on April 2, 2010

Obama's Boring Plan: Throw a Wrench in Offshore Drilling

President Obama is opening limited areas on the coasts of Virginia, North Carolina, Florida, and Alaska to offshore drilling in a supposed effort to help end the nation's dependence on foreign oil. So why aren't drilling proponents excited about it? It seems it amounts to more of a slap in the face than a positive step forward.

"The new plan offered by Obama does not affect work in areas where his actions have already barred drilling," said John McManus, President of [The John Birch Society](#). He references Obama's announcement last month shutting the door on an extensive plan to develop areas of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) previously banned from offshore drilling. It had been put in place by President George W. Bush in the closing days of his administration and would have gone into effect this July. Within days of taking office, Obama pulled the plug on the Bush plan, claiming he needed more time to gauge public opinion.



In early March, ignoring a [two-to-one ratio](#) of public support for OCS development, Obama announced he would further extend the ban until 2012, according to House [Natural Resources Committee](#) Ranking Member Doc Hastings (R-Wash.). "The Obama Administration has no intention of opening up new areas for offshore drilling during his four years in office," Hastings said at the time. He pointed out Obama's 2001 budget proposal shows revenue from new OCS leasing on a decline until 2015, from \$1.5 billion in 2009 to \$413 million, clearly indicating intent to block new development and reduce existing projects.

Now Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar [claims](#) Obama is expanding oil and gas development on the OCS in an effort to strengthen the nation's energy security and reduce America's dependence on foreign oil, "while protecting fisheries, tourism and places off U.S. coasts that are not appropriate for development." The administration says Bush's plan was "legally flawed."

Yet Obama's proposal will merely open oil and gas exploration in areas already approved for development. The Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI) [explains](#) that the announcement "obscures the fact that [most areas](#) are still being ruled off limits."

"Anyone who sees this as a step in the right direction should remember that President Obama still supports energy-rationing policies to address global warming that would cause electricity prices to, in his words, 'necessarily skyrocket,' and would require gas prices of at least seven dollars a gallon," said CEI Director of Energy Policy Myron Ebell.

Political pundit Rush Limbaugh [expressed disgust](#) over Obama's "phony" promise. He said the major



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elements of the plan are: 1. Eventually opening two-thirds of the eastern Gulf of Mexico; 2. Proceeding with drilling off Virginia only if the project clears environmental reviews; 3. Studying the viability of drilling off areas along Atlantic coasts and in Alaska. "Each one of these things has an out," Limbaugh quipped. "This is a head fake. This is designed to ... position [Obama] as a moderate in favor of developing America's natural resources." He pointed out, "We know where there is oil and none of that area is being drilled, none of it. ANWR, lots of oil. Not being drilled there."

McManus summed up the situation, saying, "Our nation now imports more than 60 percent of the oil we consume. America's neck is in a noose and the way out of it is to take advantage of oil deposits available in areas that are still locked up."



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