

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, Congressman John Olver made the following statement on the House floor:

"Madam Speaker, we are witnessing the mother of all oil and gas power plays in this country. Big Oil and their allies are desperately trying to open every possible site for oil drilling before the Texas oil men, Bush and Cheney, leave the White House in January.

Under the Bush-Cheney-McCain plan, were it to become law, every acre of the Outer Continental Shelf, 50 to 200 miles offshore, and all of our coastline would be open to leasing and drilling. You can bet your home that the most promising areas for oil production would be fully leased at the foolish, long-term, low-price policy now in effect, but that's all. There's no certainty that the newly leased areas would be producing a drop of oil 10 years out. Big Oil could simply bank their cheap long-term leases until the price of oil reaches \$200 or even \$500 per barrel. And we, the Congress and country, would be over the barrel. That, after all, has been the history.

The claim has been made that opening the Outer Continental Shelf would unlock 86 billion barrels of known estimated reserves. Eighty-six billion barrels, by the way, would provide a dozen years of America's oil without using any foreign oil at all, but our Minerals Management Service estimates that 80 percent of those reserves lie in areas already open for leasing and for drilling. So the big oil companies have already leased large areas that have the greatest potential for high production, and yet they're producing on less than one quarter of the already leased acreage. Ironically, that may be the best policy for the U.S. because America's problem is huge.

Our less than 5 percent of the planet's population consumes almost 25 percent of the oil produced in the world. We are so dependent on oil that we have limited leverage to reduce demand, but we have only 3 percent of the known oil reserves on the planet, and therefore, have very little leverage to increase the supply. Because exploration has been more thorough and extensive on our land and in our sovereign waters, the oil yet to be discovered on this planet lies not just predominantly but overwhelmingly beyond U.S. sovereignty.

The Bush-McCain solution is doomed to failure because, first, opening more land and waters to leasing will not necessarily lead to production. Second, even if it did, the production under the

best circumstances of shallow waters and of easy drilling and infrastructure in place would take 5 and, more typically, 10 years to produce. Third, if we were foolish enough to pursue that policy, we would use all of our oil, economically recoverable, in about 20 years and would be totally at the mercy of unfriendly oil producers.

For America, the only certain solution to the high price of gasoline is to reduce the consumption of gasoline. Many of the big ways to do that require time to achieve, things like developing and switching to renewable energy, the research and development of fuel cell vehicles, living closer to work, building more extensive public transportation systems, replacing the whole vehicle fleet--both cars and trucks--with high fuel efficiency vehicles.

There are immediate ways we can cut the speculation now. We can drive slower. We can drive less. We can carpool. We can use public transportation when it's possible. We can develop 'work from home' wherever and whenever that's feasible as an option. We must start pursuing all of these strategies immediately."

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