

# ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE

## Resolution in Opposition to Offshore Drilling

Executive Committee of the Palm Beach County Democratic Party finds as follows:

- Any offshore drilling in the Atlantic or Gulf of Mexico poses potential destruction to our beaches, coral reefs, and other coastal habitats.
- An oil spill, especially in the area that has been designated as the Straits of Florida Planning Area, could be accumulated and drawn up by northbound currents, including the nearby Gulf Stream, and be dispersed northward along both the Gulf and Atlantic coastlines.
- Hurricanes change the topography and configuration of the ocean floor as well as stir up huge swells, redistributing the course of any object, including dispersed oil, across thousands of miles, adversely impacting environmentally sensitive/critical biological habitats.
- According to a report in the *St. Petersburg Times*, the Coast Guard has documented more than 239,000 oil spills across the Gulf of Mexico between 1973 and 2001, and that “In one study of the area where Chevron wanted to drill, the Minerals Management Service [MMS] predicted that over the next 40 years there could be up to 870 spills of 2,000 gallons or less, which ‘is expected to result in small pollution events that could temporarily affect the enjoyment or use of some beach segments.’”
- As former Senator Bob Graham avowed, “The beaches of Florida are like the mountains of Colorado. They are somewhat our defining feature, and anything that threatens to jeopardize those beaches raises great concerns.”
- By-products of the oil-drilling process could result in catastrophic damage to our already threatened coral reefs, marine fisheries, sea turtles, marine and coastal birds, and marine mammals (including slow-moving manatees). Such damage could easily cascade into overwhelming destruction to sensitive coastal and marine environments, and subsequently to the economies of several Gulf and Atlantic Seaboard states dependent on marine industries and trade or tourism.
- In 2007, commercial fishery landings in the Atlantic Region totaled approximately 1.4 billion pounds with a value of over \$1.4 billion, and in the same year, residents and visitors took over 58 million marine recreational fishing trips, with over a quarter of these trips occurring in eastern Florida.
- Government-funded studies have shown that in just one of Florida’s 67 counties, more than \$2 billion is generated annually in reef-related sales (including hotels, restaurants, marinas, etc.), more than \$1 billion in income, and 36,000 full- and part-time jobs (Broward County, 2000-2001 figures).
- As pointed out by the new Secretary of Interior, Ken Salazar, there is very little data on available resources (and what little there is, is twenty to thirty years old) on the biggest area in the draft plan for oil and gas drilling within the Atlantic Seaboard from Maine to Florida. Technology has changed dramatically in the past 20 years. Study of what potential oil and gas resources may be available in this area is needed so a more complete and accurate benefits vs. risk assessment can be made before any new drilling leases are considered.
- The Minerals Management Service has identified a number of unique benthic habitats in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico Planning Area that require additional investigation to be adequately characterized, including topographic and geomorphic diversity that contribute to unique seafloor habitats and communities. The continental slope of the Gulf is considered the most complex geophysical region in the world related to wide spread features and faulting caused

by the movement of underlying salt deposits, and as such, should be protected from any possibility of oil seepage or spill.

- The 2010-2015 proposal properly comes under purview and review of certain laws, and does not seem to be consistent with the goals of the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), nor the Clean Air Act (CAA).
- Significant potential exists for offshore wind, wave, tidal, and ocean current energy within the DOI/MMS offshore energy strategy. These should become the focus of our offshore energy plan.
- President Obama and Secretary Salazar have avowed a commitment to make decisions based on sound science and the public interest, and we do not believe these are consistent with the expansion of oil and gas leases that are described in the 2010-2015 plan.
- A comprehensive energy plan envisioned by President Obama and Secretary Salazar, will secure our “energy independence for the sake of our national security, our economic security, and our environmental security,” and would not depend exclusively on oil and gas.
- Congressional testimony from the Baker Institute in 2008 reported that “The problem of U.S. oil import dependence is a complicated one to solve. It is going to take a portfolio of policies aimed at improving efficiency, encouraging alternative fuels, promoting public transportation, etc., to curb gasoline use in the United States. It may also require changes in lifestyle and perhaps, depending on circumstances in the future, personal sacrifices. That is the reality of our situation and the barometer through which proposed energy policies should be judged. The bottom line is that in order for us to decrease oil consumption, many of the proposed policies would have to be implemented all at the same time.”

**BASED ON THE FORGOING FINDINGS, NOW BE IT RESOLVED,** that the Executive Committee of the Palm Beach County Democratic Party, the elected representatives of 390,600 Palm Beach County Democrats, all being citizens of the State of Florida, declares as follows

1. There should be no offshore oil or gas drilling to tarnish the esthetic beauty or enjoyment of residents and visitors to Florida’s scenic coastline.
2. Our Federal and State legislators are strongly urged to take any and all preventive measures to ensure protection of our Florida coastline, including its beaches, coral reefs, mangroves, lagoons, sea grass, marine fisheries, sea turtles, marine mammals, sea and wading birds. No legislation that permits offshore oil or gas exploration or drilling is acceptable.
3. The U.S. Department of Interior and its Mineral Management Service and U.S. Geological Survey, are strongly urged to vigorously pursue viable alternate offshore renewable energy resources and not increase existing OCS oil and gas exploitation beyond the current 2012 commitments.
4. The U.S. Department of Interior and its Mineral Management Service and U.S. Geological Survey, must reverse action previously taken in order to phase out offshore oil and gas drilling for the safety and protection of all U.S. coastlines.