

## Energy fraud!

Democrats are engineering another energy swindle that will cost consumers and taxpayers

Roy Innis

Since publication of my book, *Energy Keepers - Energy Killers: The new civil rights battle*, millions of Americans have become aware that this country has vast untapped energy resources.

Three-fourths of US voters now support expanded onshore and offshore drilling. A bipartisan coalition in Congress wants to increase domestic petroleum, coal and nuclear power, while fostering conservation and wind, solar and other energy opportunities.

They've been blocked at every turn by liberal Democrats, many of whom are working with radical environmentalists to eliminate proven hydrocarbon and nuclear technologies that provide 93% of our energy, and replace them with systems that currently generate less than 1% of the energy that safeguards our jobs, homes, security and prosperity.

However, political realities and voter outrage over soaring gasoline, food and heating costs forced House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority leader Harry Reid to devise an elaborate hoax. It had the trappings of a pro-energy bill – but was as authentic as the betting house and announcer in the classic Newman-Redford film, *The Sting*.

Their legislation “expanded offshore leasing” – but only beyond 100 miles off most of our coasts, and 50 miles off four states that would get no revenues from leasing or production, and thus would have no incentive to permit leasing. In other words, it allowed leasing only where there was no petroleum, or where drilling and production would be so far offshore and so expensive that no sane company would do it. The bill made 88% of our nation's offshore oil and gas permanently off limits – along with jobs and some \$800 billion in revenues that development would generate for state and federal governments.

The pseudo-energy bill also imposed new subsidies to promote unreliable wind and solar power – paying for them with higher taxes, higher electricity rates and new taxes on oil companies, which then would have less money to drill in the few places that aren't off limits. It mandated that utilities magically increase their wind and solar electricity generation from 1.5% today to 15% 2020.

Drafted largely by environmentalists and lobbyists, the legislation would have undermined our free market system and given Congress and bureaucrats the power of Roman emperors to give thumbs up or down to companies, industries and jobs. It would have made lobbyists and pressure groups more important to business success or failure than quality products and services, innovative R&D or sound management.

It narrowly passed the House on a party-line vote. But Senate Democratic leaders knew they didn't have the votes to override a threatened veto. So they let the bill die. However, Congressman Steny Hoyer says restoring the offshore oil drilling ban “will be a top priority” for Democrats in 2009.

They hope we won't still be angry about this attempted swindle and soaring energy prices. I wouldn't bet the rent money on that.

Americans know better than ever before how important abundant, reliable, affordable energy is to our national security, way of life and civil rights.

We know what soaring fuel prices are doing to our airline, tourism, manufacturing and other industries, Meals on Wheels volunteers, and our ability to buy food, heat and cool our homes, take a vacation, and save for college and retirement. We know high prices make it impossible for many to give more to charity than Senator Joe Biden's lousy \$328 a year.

We know what our businesses, schools, hospitals and lives would be like if the electricity went off every time the wind stopped blowing. What Phoenix, Dallas and Miami would be like without affordable air-conditioning. What Green Bay, New York and Toronto would be like without affordable heating.

In one year, we could double offshore oil production from California, once we issue leases and permits to drill from platforms that already exist right off the Golden State coast. We could go to the Eastern Gulf of Mexico – near Florida, not far from where the Cubans and Chinese are talking about drilling just 45 miles off the Sunshine State coast. In a few years, we'd have significant production – without harming the environment. Ditto off the Virginia coast, out West, and in Alaska's Chukchi Sea and Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Our energy woes have nothing to do with technology or the will of oil companies to lease and drill. They're due to politics, moratoriums, lawsuits and anti-drilling pressure-group tactics that block drilling everywhere we turn. We're fed up with it.

This anti-energy insanity has got to stop. We're the only country on Earth that deliberately locks up its own energy resources, and then spends \$700 billion a year (the price of the Wall Street bailout) to import substitutes. We're driving up energy prices and forcing poor families to choose between buying a gallon of milk or a gallon of gasoline.

If Congress can't get its act together this year, we'll make darn sure it gets religion next year.

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Roy Innis is chairman of the Congress of Racial Equality and its Stop the War on the Poor campaign.

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