

(Washington, D.C.) – U.S. Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) today sought to prevent the passage of legislation in the House Resources Committee that, if enacted, would endanger New Jersey's beaches, as well as its fishing and tourism industries. The action comes just one week before the first anniversary of the BP Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico.

“Some of my colleagues on the committee seem willing to ignore the lessons of that environmental and economic calamity. I am not,” said Holt. “These bills were written as if the Deepwater Horizon disaster never occurred. They make offshore drilling less safe, not more safe.”

The three Republican bills—H.R. 1229, 1230, and 1231—would, collectively, have the effect of accelerating—without proper safety and environmental reviews—oil and gas drilling leases off the east coast of the United States. Today, Holt will offer several amendments to the bills designed to prevent unsafe, “fast and loose” oil and gas leases from putting New Jerseyans at risk:

- An amendment to H.R. 1229 that would strike the language that would “deem approved” any permits on which there is no decision after 60 days.

- An amendment to H.R. 1230 that would forbid companies from obtaining new leases or permits to drill unless the Secretary can certify that the company is meeting basic safety and environmental requirements on its existing leases.

- An amendment to H.R. 1230 that would strike language to deem sufficient pre-BP spill environmental reviews. The amendment ensures that the future leasing in the Gulf fully considers the environmental impacts of drilling, so that we do not endanger more lives and further imperil coastal economies by making the same mistakes again

- An amendment to H.R. 1231 that would impose an escalating fee on the oil and gas companies who continue to squat on unused drilling leases without producing. The fees would then be sent back to the U.S. Treasury to reduce the deficit.

Holt decried the Republican's disregard for the key recommendations of the commission that investigated the Deepwater Horizon disaster.

"The federal government's previous failures to police properly BP's offshore drilling operations produced a disaster whose consequences will be with us for a long, long time," said Holt. "Instead of working to prevent future environmental and economic disasters, these bills, if enacted unchanged, will almost guarantee more Deepwater Horizon-scale tragedies. Those are not, I think, the values of the people of my state or of this country, and I will do all I can to see that these bills never become law as written."

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