

Together with Ranking Democrat Ed Markey and the staff of the House Committee on Natural Resources, I have worked for more than a year to gather and analyze data about safety and environmental violations committed by oil and gas companies. Our report, [“Drilling Dysfunction: How the Failure to Oversee Drilling on Public Lands Endangers Health and the Environment,”](#) has just been released, and its findings are alarming.

The report finds that from 1998 to 2011, more than two thousand violations were handed out by the U.S. Department of Interior to oil and gas companies drilling on taxpayer-owned lands. More than 500 of these violations were classified as “major” by committee staff, including 293 violations related to non-functional blowout preventers and 113 citations for deficiencies in casing and cementing programs.

Yet the enforcement of safety rules was erratic and inconsistent, and all told, the Interior Department collected only \$273,875 in fines. That’s roughly equal to a single minute’s worth of oil company profits – the equivalent of levying a 10-cent fine against someone who earns \$50,000 a year.

Can anyone seriously argue that these fines are sufficient to deter wrongdoing or that they reflect the very real risks that drilling poses to the environment and public health?

The Longest-Serving Representative with an Unbroken 100% Environmental Rating

The League of Conservation Voters has just announced its [2011 National Environmental Scorecard](#), and I was pleased to see that they have once again recognized my efforts to protect the environment and public health with a 100 percent rating.

Long before coming to Congress, I was committed to protecting and sustaining our environment – our air, water, land, and the complex web of life. It is that commitment that is reflected in the League of Conservation Voters’ rating. In fact, I am now the longest-serving member of the U.S. House of Representatives to have received a 100 percent rating in each year of service.

Too often in 2011, the privileged interests at oil companies and corporate polluters fought to weaken the laws that protect our natural resources, seeking to exploit a public trust for private gain. We must all work to ensure that, in 2012, they do not succeed.

Free Tax Workshop for Small Business Owners

On Thursday, February 23, at 9 a.m., I am hosting a free tax workshop for small business owners in conjunction with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). IRS officials will provide the

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most current information about recent changes to the tax code, including changes to tax credits and incentives for small businesses. The workshop will be held at the South Brunswick Public Library (110 Kingston Lane, Monmouth Junction). If you are interested in attending, please [click here](#)

for an RSVP form. If you have questions, please call Andrew Black of my staff at (609) 750-9365. I hope to see you in South Brunswick.

Sincerely,

Rush Holt
Member of Congress