

Mr. Chair, my friend from Colorado talked about the harm that this bill would do and why it's important that the application be approved even if the review is not complete, even if the review is not yet done right. I wonder if the gentleman from Colorado thinks that maybe a student should graduate even if he hasn't taken the exam because the semester is coming to an end. Well, time's up. I guess we should just declare the student duly passed--even if the review hasn't been done.

That's a question. If the gentleman feels that a student should be deemed passed because the semester is coming to an end, even if the review of that student's work has not been completed. I would yield to the gentleman if he cares to answer that. If not, I will continue.

This legislation might make sense if we thought there was some economic need for it, if we thought that there was some safety need for it, if we thought it was important to grease the skids and move through the environmental review quickly. But none of those things apply. This will not bring down prices. Certainly, release of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve would do more for prices at the pump than this. This won't make a bit of difference in the price at the pump, this legislation. It certainly won't help support an important but troubled industry. Actually, this industry is not troubled. This industry is going to take home about \$100 billion dollars in profits this year. We don't need to grease the skids and make things easier for this industry because getting the review right would subject them to undue hardship. No. In fact, this is a very dangerous provision in a bill that is part of the set of "Amnesia Acts." The bill is part of these three bills that pretend that there are no lessons to be learned from 2010; the bill that pretends the gulf oil blowout never occurred; that wills amnesia on the policy of the United States so that we forget that the worst oil spill in history from which there are real lessons to be learned never occurred.

I urge passage of this amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

...

I rise in strong opposition to H.R. 1229. Need I remind the Members of this body that 1 year and 19 days ago, the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded, killing 11 workers and creating economic and environmental havoc. For 87 days following the explosion, more than 4 million barrels of oil spewed from the blown-out Macondo well, coating nearly 1,000 miles of gulf coastline and temporarily closing over 88 square miles of some of the Nation's most productive fishing grounds. Yet this Congress has not enacted a single legislative reform to improve the safety of offshore drilling. Instead, the majority now brings forward in the name of spurious claims a bill to encourage more domestic offshore drilling without applying the lessons learned from the gulf blowout. With the spurious claim that more domestic offshore drilling will lower gas prices, they claim that we have to grease the skids, we have to open the doors, we have to give further breaks to the oil companies.

Now, sadly, it seems their motto is "Ignore the spill. Drill, baby, drill."

Frankly, the majority's trio of offshore drilling bills were written as though the Deepwater Horizon disaster had never occurred. That's why I refer to them as the "amnesia acts." Collectively, they will make offshore drilling less safe while opening up vast new swaths of our coastlines without adding any new safety requirements or environmental safeguards on the oil and gas industry.

So today we are taking up the second "amnesia act." H.R. 1229 would impose artificial and arbitrary deadlines on the Department of the Interior to approve permits to drill. Specifically, this legislation would require the Department to act on a permit to drill within 30 days. After 60 days, whether or not--whether or not, let me emphasize that--the safety and environmental review has been completed by the Interior Department, the drilling application would be deemed approved.

Need I remind my colleagues, Mr. Chairman, that offshore drilling in U.S. waters was determined by the spill commission, the bipartisan, independent spill commission, to be four times more deadly than in other parts of the world prior to the Deepwater Horizon tragedy. It was four times more deadly to drill in the gulf by the same companies than to drill, for example, in the North Sea, hardly a comfortable environment. Now, under this bill, we could actually have less careful oversight and review of offshore drilling than we had before the Deepwater Horizon disaster.

This bill is a dangerous solution in search of a really nonexistent problem. Since the implementation of new safety and environmental standards in June of last year, the Department

has added staff, improved its review, and has issued 52 shallow water drilling permits. Only six more permits currently are pending. Since the oil industry demonstrated the capability to contain a deepwater blowout in mid-February, we think, the Department has issued permits for 13 new deepwater wells. There are only 12 permits in the queue for approval; yet the majority is claiming we've got to grease the skids, that we've got to remove any impediments for the oil companies, that we have to ``drill, baby, drill."

Ironically, the enactment of H.R. 1229 could halt this progress. This bill could hamper new permits being issued or stop new permits altogether because the Department might be forced to deny permits if the safety and environmental reviews are not completed in the arbitrary 60 days.

Moreover, Mr. Chairman, this legislation would issue a blanket extension of existing leases. In contrast to this across-the-board approach, the Department is working on a case-by-case basis to extend existing leases affected by the temporary suspension of new drilling, where such action is warranted, not on a blanket basis but on the basis of the actual facts, of the actual evidence. H.R. 1229 would give a free ride to companies even if their leases are many years from expiring.

With regard to the comment that has been made already in this debate, that this is about prices at the gasoline pump, need I remind my colleagues--now, this was under the George Bush administration--that in 2008, the Energy Information Administration said, if all drilling over the entire east coast Continental Shelf were opened up, the effect on oil prices would be ``insignificant."

H.R. 1229 also contains language designed to close the doors of the courthouse to citizens who believe that the Federal Government is not complying with the law. Imagine that. Citizens who are trying to be diligent citizens would not be able to make sure that the law is being applied. Citizens from Florida or Alabama would be forced to bring any lawsuits regarding energy projects in the Gulf of Mexico to Louisiana or Texas courts. In addition, H.R. 1229 contains language that would prevent attorneys' fees from being awarded in successful cases--a deterrent if I've ever heard of one. These provisions are aimed at environmental plaintiffs, but will almost certainly impair the legal rights of many other potential plaintiffs, including other oil and gas companies.

In the wake of the Deepwater Horizon disaster, the principles guiding offshore drilling should be smart and safe. If H.R. 1229 is enacted, the guiding principles will be fast and loose. This is the

wrong response to the largest oil spill in U.S. waters. We should not rush to allow drilling permits to be deemed approved without the appropriate safety and environmental checks. We should not provide blanket extensions to existing leases. We should not close the doors of the courthouse to American citizens. We should not pass this bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

...

The gentleman used the term "trifecta." It's a curious selection of words because, indeed, you could see the oil companies right now lining up at the ticket window to cash in their trifecta winnings if this goes forward.

The oil companies are currently sitting on 60 million acres of public land onshore and offshore in which they are not producing. The oil industry is sitting on more than 11.5 billion barrels of oil, nearly as much as they could ever get from drilling up and down the east coast and the west coast. This is where they should be directing their attention, but instead, where are they directing their attention as they bring in profits that for this year looked to be something like \$100 billion? They are using those profits not to provide more resources for the American people but to buy back stock. Exxon, which had about a \$10 billion profit in the first quarter of this year, just the first three months, used most of its money, more than half of it, to buy back stock.

So it is curious that my colleague used the phrase "trifecta" because, indeed, this is a bonanza, a big winning ticket for the Big Oil companies.

I reserve the balance of my time.

...

We are indeed concerned about jobs. For the example that my friend from Louisiana gives about someone whose livelihood is at stake, I could produce dozens of others, maybe a shrimp fisherman. You know, my friends maybe remember the ``Forrest Gump" movie. They've seen those pictures. In fact, my friend from Louisiana probably has been out on one of those shrimp boats. Well, they were sitting idle. They were sitting idle for weeks and weeks.

The breeding grounds, the fisheries, were and still are in jeopardy. People all over the country are not buying the fish that drank of this black gold. In fact, 88,000 square miles, as I said earlier, of fisheries were polluted by this tremendous spill, and need I remind my colleagues that the coastal communities of the Gulf of Mexico, the heart of offshore drilling, that the jobs that are dependent on tourism and fishing exceed all the natural resource extraction and mining jobs by a factor of five, five times as many jobs dependent on tourism and fisheries.

Yes, we should learn the lesson, rather than hurrying through these permits. We should learn the lessons of last year's oil spill and protect those jobs.

I reserve the balance of my time.