

Castle Voices Opposition and Votes No on Offshore Drilling -- June 29, 2006

Washington, D.C. -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle today opposed H.R. 4761, the Deep Ocean Energy Resources Act, which would lift the prohibition on drilling in the Outer Continental Shelf. Castle's official statement for the record follows.

"I rise today in opposition to H.R. 4761, the Deep Ocean Energy Resources Act, which would end a twenty-five year oil and natural gas drilling prohibition for most of the country's offshore waters.

The increased strain that high-energy prices are having on the pockets of many Americans, and the national security concerns over the United States' dependence on foreign oil are real problems that deserve thoughtful, multi-pronged policy solutions. While the severity of current energy trends cannot be ignored, we cannot rush to drill before first crafting a comprehensive energy policy with solutions for meeting both our immediate and future energy needs. We must work to increase vehicle fuel efficiency, spur investment in efficiency and renewable energy research and technology, and improve conservation methods.

I respect the attempt to increase the states' ability to participate in the planning of oil and gas development off their shores, however H.R. 4671 goes too far and undermines the strong federal protections for our coastal waters. H.R. 4671 purports to allow states to maintain control of activities in their coastal waters, but instead ties states' hands in many ways with unprecedented provisions. It subordinates every other use of coastal waters to oil drilling, blocking any effort to use waters in a way that could ever limit drilling, undermines states' authority under the Coastal Zone Management Act, changes state marine boundary maps, and it eliminates many environmental reviews and public participation requirements for issuing oil leases and for exploration and drilling activities. Clearly, this is of concern to our State and other nearby States too (see attached Governor's letter).

I am also concerned that this legislation lifts the offshore drilling ban, while we continue to ignore many conservation and alternative fuel proposals, which would have a more immediate and beneficial effect on meeting our energy needs.

H.R. 4761 does not simply deal with increased drilling, but instead has other far-reaching implications for coastal states and federal revenues. This legislation would create an open-ended fund for drilling states, with no reporting requirements, at a time when we have a huge federal deficit. The estimated cost of this transfer from federal revenues to states is estimated to be several hundred billion dollars over 60 years, according to President Bush's Statement of Administration Policy.

While a thoughtful approach to offshore drilling is worthy of consideration, this legislation is not good policy for Delaware or the United States."

Attached is a letter addressed to Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi from Delaware Governor Ruth Ann Minner, Governor Jon S. Corzine of New Jersey and Governor M. Jodi Rell of Connecticut, outlining their concerns with the legislation.

