

Rep. Corrine Brown
Testimony at Rules Committee
H.R. 1229 – Putting the Gulf of Mexico Back to Work Act
May 4, 2011 at 3:00, H-313 The Capital

Chairman Drier, Ranking Member Slaughter:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today in support of my amendment. My amendment is simple. It would make permanent the current moratorium on drilling in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico that currently expires in 2022. This moratorium was made law as part of the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 (GOMESA) (P.L. 109-432).

The amendment would have no effect on the budget as scored by the Congressional Budget Office. However, this amendment would have a significant effect on the economy of Florida with the knowledge that the tourism industry will be protected from an unforeseen accident destroying the wonderful beaches and shores of this great state.

More than 20 years after the Exxon Valdez oil spill, we have yet to entirely clean up Prince William Sound in Alaska. Oil is still being found buried in the sand from the BP oil spill. The frequent occurrence of extreme weather that the Eastern Gulf Coast experiences, including hurricanes and severe storms, could easily produce an oil spill, even with the technological improvements in oil and natural gas operations.

Storms along the Gulf Coast in 2005 caused 124 oil spills in the waters of the Gulf of Mexico, and Hurricane Katrina caused a 233,000 gallon oil spill, while Hurricane Rita worsened the damage with 508,000 gallons of oil spilled. In these instances, the oil rigs were far enough away from Florida's shores that there was not an imminent risk of the currents pulling the oil to our shores, but if the rigs were placed any closer, our beaches would face complete destruction: as we have seen recently, cleanup methods for these spills are incapable of removing more than a small fraction of the oil.

Florida is a beautiful state with miles of coastline. The Sunshine State economy depends heavily on tourism and the environment is the key factor in Florida's attractiveness to tourists. The tourism industry has an economic impact of \$57 billion on Florida's economy. Not inconsequential is the 770 miles of gulf coastline and 5,095 of gulf tidal shoreline, and the hundreds of miles of beaches.

The majority of Floridians oppose drilling in the Gulf of Mexico because of the threat to the tourism industry, which is vital to the state's economy

Florida's coastline is a treasure not just for Floridians, but all Americans and the rest of the world. For years Florida's delegation has worked together to protect our coastline and natural resources. As long as there are rigs in the area, the potential for devastation to Florida's beaches persists. Florida's beaches are not something we can afford to compromise.

The impact of offshore drilling threatens irreversible scarring to the landscape, affecting thousands of species, each critical to the ecosystem. The great weather, pristine beaches, and marine wildlife are the main reasons people visit our fine state.

If an accident were to occur, causing an oil spill to wash ashore on Florida's beaches, the damage would be devastating and would cripple the state. It would only take ONE spill to ruin our economy for years, putting yet another tough burden on the tourism industry.

Drilling off the coast of Florida is a detrimental environmental and economic miscalculation. Before any new areas are opened and Florida's pristine beaches are put at risk, I would very much like to see drilling in the areas that are already opened, and increased funding for research for new technologies.

Allow my amendment to be considered by the full House. Make the Corrine Brown Amendment in order.