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CONGRESSWOMAN SHEILA JACKSON LEE, OF TEXAS

TALKING POINTS

TO AMEND H.R. 1229

"PUTTING THE GULF OF MEXICO BACK TO WORK ACT"



TUESDAY, MAY3, 2011

I thank the Chairman for this opportunity to explain my amendment to H.R. 1229, which will extend the initial 30 day approval period to 60 days and allow two additional 30 day extensions. My amendment also removes the provision that would automatically approve permit applications if a decision on the application could not be reached within a 60 day time-period. This amendment strives to take the necessary time and precautions to safeguard against any potential risks to our waters ways while aiming to put the Gulf region back to work.

- As the Representative for Houston, I am committed to finding a balance that will support continued growth in the energy industry while protecting our environment.

- I understand the importance of putting the hard-working people of the Gulf region back to work, and I believe it can be done in compromise with the Department of the Interior.
- Prohibiting the Department of the Interior from ensuring the safety of the Gulf before issuing drilling permits puts our water ways at risk.
- The Department of the Interior needs additional resources prior to imposing a 30 day application review period. These resources should include trained experts and specialists who can then aid in the review of these complex permit applications. The importance of studied and careful review of permit applications cannot be understated.

- The Deepwater Horizon oil spill had devastating effects on the entire Gulf Region. 4.9 million gallons of oil poured into the Gulf of Mexico, lined the coastlines of several states, harmed wildlife, and severely impacted fishing and tourism industries.
- Given the aftermath of this oil spill, it is easy to understand why those tasked with protecting the Gulf from another such disaster would want additional time and precautions before issuing permits to drill.
- Extending the initial period to 60 days, and allowing for 30 day extensions will provide more time for a thorough approval process.

- We can protect our water ways and create jobs at the same time.
- Houston is the fourth most populous city in the United States, and the greater Houston area remains a diversified regional economy, with the energy industry contributing 50 percent of our economic base for employment.
- There is no denying the important role the energy industry has in creating jobs in Houston and across our Nation. There are 3,468 energy-related firms in the Houston metropolitan area alone.
- The oil and gas industry supports job growth in my state of Texas and across our nation.

- In Texas, the oil and gas industry supports 1.7 million jobs and approximately 25% of the state's economy, whereas nationwide the industry supports 9.2 million jobs and 7.5 % of our nation's economy.
- After the *Deepwater Horizon* explosion and the resulting oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, we all learned the importance of ensuring that the industry responsible for creating jobs is also responsible for taking all necessary precautions to prevent a potential blow out. Oil and gas lessees or operators who apply for permits must meet reasonable standards to prevent any future explosions.

- After the attacks of September 11, 2001. It has always been risky to rely on unstable and unfriendly nations as the source of so much of our domestic oil supply. Currently, offshore petroleum is a source for roughly a third of domestic oil production. Any increase in our own production will place us one step closer to decreasing our dependence on foreign oil.
- My amendment provides guidelines that must be followed to ensure a decision is issued on all applications for drilling permits.
- Additionally, by removing the automatic approval provision, this amendment will prevent the Department of the Interior from denying applications solely to prevent automatic approval due to time constraints.

- Extending the time allowed for evaluation of drilling permit applications, and removing the automatic approval provision is beneficial to the Dept. of the Interior as well as the energy companies, without adverse effects to industry production, consumers or the environment.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to make my amendment in order.

Thank you, Madam Chairman. I yield back the remainder of my time.