



With Protections for California's Coastlines Lacking, Senator Feinstein States Opposition to S. 3711

July 31, 2006

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today expressed her opposition to the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 (S. 3711), which provides no additional protections to prohibit drilling off the California coastline.

“California should be accorded the same protection as Florida gets in this bill,” Senator Feinstein stated in her remarks. “An oil spill would scar our coastline, costing billions of dollars and destroying vulnerable marine ecosystems. In addition, a healthy coast is vital to California’s economy and our quality of life. Our State’s ocean-dependent industries are estimated to generate \$17 billion of revenue each year.”

“Given the potential for a bill to come back that would threaten California’s coast, I must vote against this bill,” Senator Feinstein said.

The following is the text of Senator Feinstein’s statement entered into the Congressional Record:

“Mr. President, I rise today to oppose S. 3711, which will allow drilling in the Gulf and create a new revenue-sharing scheme to provide additional resources for the Gulf States.

Let me first say that I am not opposed to drilling in the Gulf. In fact, in 2001, I voted to open a portion of the Gulf, known as Lease Sale 181, to drilling. That vote was a codification of the agreement between former President Clinton and the former Governor of Florida, Lawton Chiles. Yet the agreement was repudiated after President Bush came into office and reduced the amount of acreage that could be drilled in the Gulf of Mexico at the request of Florida’s Governor Jeb Bush.

In fact, I rise today in opposition to this bill not because it opens up areas of the Gulf to drilling, but because it protects the West Coast of Florida from drilling until 2022 – ten years beyond the current presidential moratorium – while providing no additional protections for California’s coast.

California should be accorded the same protection as Florida gets in this bill.

An oil spill would scar our coastline, costing billions of dollars and destroying vulnerable marine ecosystems.

In addition, a healthy coast is vital to California's economy and our quality of life. Our State's ocean-dependent industries are estimated to generate \$17 billion of revenue each year.

That is why Californians continue to be nearly united in their opposition to drilling off the coast. Today, 64 percent of Californians oppose drilling, and the number of Californians opposing drilling off our coast has only grown.

The opposition to drilling off of California's coast dates back more than thirty years. In 1972, California voters passed a citizen-initiated proposition which created the California Coastal Zone Conservation Commission, charged with developing a statewide plan for protecting the state's coastal resources. In the years that have followed, 17 cities and nine counties have passed voter-approved ordinances opposing oil drilling.

In 1994, the California Legislature passed a bill that prohibited the extraction of oil and gas in state waters. Every year since the passage of this law, the State Legislature has passed joint resolutions opposing oil drilling off the California coast.

The Governor, the California Resources Secretary, the Secretary of California Environmental Protection Agency, and the Lieutenant Governor have all been on record supporting the moratorium on offshore oil and gas leasing activities off the coast of California.

Resources Secretary Mike Chrisman, who is also the Chairman of the California Ocean Protection Council, has in fact stated:

'Any pending federal legislation regarding Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) oil and gas leasing must retain all protections from the Congressional leasing moratorium and should seek to make these protections permanent.'

Governor Schwarzenegger has sent a letter to every Senator expressing his 'opposition to any measure that would weaken the national oil and gas leasing moratorium that has been protecting the California coast for the last 25 years.'

I ask unanimous consent that the Governor's letter be printed in the record.

This bill cannot be viewed in a vacuum. Last month, the House of Representatives passed a bill that would lift the current moratoria that exists for the Pacific and Atlantic Coasts.

Congressman Pombo, a key sponsor of the House bill, has said that the House will not accept the Senate bill. Congressman Barton, Chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, said on Wednesday, July 26, that 'we would certainly encourage (the Senate) to go broader' than allowing drilling in the Gulf.

Without a concrete commitment from the House leaders that they will take up the Senate bill and pass it without amendment, I cannot support this bill.

I would also like to express my disappointment that we have been denied an opportunity to offer amendments to this bill.

First, I believe we need a vote on an amendment I have cosponsored, authored by Senator Menendez, which would extend the moratoria for the Pacific and Atlantic Coasts through 2022. For California, this would extend the Federal moratorium by 10 years as it is set to expire in 2012.

This amendment would provide the same protections to California as the underlying bill does for Florida. In so doing, the amendment would reliably protect the California coast by enacting a long-term legislative moratorium.

But we will not be allowed to consider this, or any other amendments that would promote energy efficiency and new energy technologies.

With oil prices at \$75 per barrel, and natural gas almost \$7 per million BTUs, we need real fixes to our energy problems.

Unfortunately, the underlying bill is not going to fix this nation's energy problems.

I have also filed an amendment, with the bipartisan support of Senators Snowe, Durbin, Chafee, Inouye, Collins, Cantwell, Lautenberg, Boxer, Menendez, Lieberman, and Reed to increase fuel economy standards by ten miles per gallon in ten years.

Not only is this technologically feasible to do today, the proposal would also save more oil in just over one year than the underlying bill will generate.

Specifically, this amendment would save 2.5 million barrels of oil per day by 2025, the same amount of oil we currently import from the Persian Gulf every day.

That translates into 912.5 million barrels of oil per year, or just less than the 1.25 billion barrels that the underlying bill would generate.

Increasing fuel economy standards would also prevent 420 million metric tons of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere, or the equivalent of taking 90 million cars (or 75 million cars and light trucks) off the road in one year.

Perhaps most importantly, though, the bill would save consumers as much as \$2,500 over the life of a vehicle.

So if we are serious about bringing down the cost of gasoline at the pump, this amendment would be considered and adopted by the Senate.

And if we want to have a real impact on natural gas prices, we would be promoting energy efficiency.

California has proven that energy efficiency works – through the most aggressive energy efficiency policies in the nation, the State has kept its per capita energy use flat while the rest of the nation's energy use has increased by 50 percent.

That is why Senator Snowe and I wanted to offer an amendment on tax incentives for consumers to install the most energy efficient technologies in both residential and commercial buildings.

While proponents of the underlying bill say that Lease Sale 181 and 181 South will provide 5.83 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, our amendment would save seven trillion cubic feet of natural gas. In other words, we can save more natural gas through the Snowe/Feinstein energy efficiency tax incentive package than from Lease Sale 181 and 181 South combined.

I also have significant fiscal concerns with the underlying bill.

While I commend Senator Landrieu for shepherding a proposal through the Senate that will generously benefit her State, I have concerns about the cost of the proposal.

According to estimates, the bill will cost the Treasury approximately \$20 billion from Fiscal Year 2007 through Fiscal Year 2055.

This bill creates a new permanent federal entitlement for just four states that could cost the Federal Treasury \$12-15 billion per year in 2056 and every year thereafter.

At a time when this nation is facing a mounting national debt of \$8.4 trillion and a crushing federal deficit of \$300 billion, we should not be creating a new entitlement program for four States that could cost us hundreds of billions of dollars over the next Century.

We are already struggling to meet our long-term commitments and face a looming entitlement crisis as baby boomers retire, straining the already overextended Social Security and Medicare systems.

For all these reasons, I am going to vote no on cloture and no on the bill.

Before I close, though, Mr. President, I would like to say that Senator Landrieu has been a tireless advocate for her constituents. I had hoped to support her in her efforts to restore coastal Louisiana.

Unfortunately, though, given the potential for a bill to come back that would threaten California's coast, I must vote against this bill.

I ask unanimous consent that this statement be inserted in the record in the appropriate place as read.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the Floor.”

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