



[Obama's budget reveals true agenda on energy](#)

By Rep. Doc Hastings
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For the past two years, President Obama has given Americans mixed signals regarding his position on offshore energy production.

Sen. Obama opposed it. Candidate Obama changed his mind when gas prices soared. President Obama has stalled efforts to expand it, but then seemingly promoted it in this year's State of the Union address. Understandably, his ever-changing position has left Americans confused and frustrated.

Yet we may have just discovered a valuable piece of information to help solve this puzzle. Hidden deep within the president's budget proposal released on Feb. 1 are numbers that reveal his true intentions.

The budget shows that revenues collected from new offshore leasing will decline over the next five years - from \$1.5 billion in 2009, to only \$413 million in fiscal 2015. If the president planned on expanding offshore drilling, revenues would be increasing, not decreasing.

Despite what the president says, numbers don't lie. This budget clearly indicates that he has no intention of opening additional areas to drilling off our nation's coast.

To anyone who has been following the Department of the Interior, this revelation comes as no surprise. We've seen the writing on the wall.

First, there was a six-month delay on the new 2010 offshore drilling plan in order to extend the public comment period. Those six months came and went in September - yet still no plan.

Then Interior Secretary Ken Salazar announced that a new plan may not be in place until 2012. This means it's possible that no new areas will be opened for offshore drilling during the president's term.

With 68 percent of Americans supporting offshore-energy production, this is not a record I'd want going into an election year. It's flat-out unacceptable from a president who claims he wants to increase our energy independence.

Americans have already waited long enough for new offshore drilling. When families experienced pain at the pump during the summer of 2008, they demanded action. The

president and Congress responded by lifting the nearly 20-year ban on drilling. But little did the public know that they'd possibly have to wait up to four more years before any further action was taken.

Removing the ban on drilling opened up over 500 million acres that were previously unavailable. Imagine the possibilities this creates for new jobs, more energy and increased security. In these economic times, it's unfathomable that this administration has chosen to drag its feet on this incredible opportunity.

The No. 1 priority right now for Americans is job creation. While everyone recognizes the problem, those who control Washington continue to falsely believe that throwing hundreds of millions of dollars at projects selected by government agencies is the answer. Democrats passed a \$787 billion "stimulus bill," yet our economy continues to lose jobs. Now the administration wants Congress to pass another jobs bill, which means more government spending and putting our nation further into debt.

However, according to American Energy Alliance, new offshore drilling would create over a million new jobs at no cost to American taxpayers - in fact it would actually make taxpayers money. Moving forward with a new offshore lease plan will enable private companies to invest their own money into American energy production. This is private investment that will create jobs instead of government spending that balloons the debt. If the president is really looking to put people back to work, this would be an ideal place to start.

During a recent town hall, the president said that "American-grown energy is good for our security." I whole heartedly agree, which is why I find it difficult to understand why the administration is refusing to increase American oil and gas production. We have domestic resources, but we are choosing not to use them. Instead, we continue to import oil and allow our country's energy to be at the mercy of volatile and hostile foreign governments.

It's important to recognize that expanding offshore drilling can be done in a responsible, environmentally safe way. State-of-the-art technology has allowed us to safely procure oil and gas from deep under our oceans. Without a doubt, drilling in the U.S. is cleaner and safer than in many foreign countries with far lower environmental protections and standards. Importing oil not only puts our national security at risk, but also the environment.

It is clear that more drilling is not the single magic solution to our nation's energy crisis - but it is an important component that can't be ignored. Increased oil and natural gas production must be part of an all-of-the-above energy plan (like the Republicans' American Energy Act, H.R. 2846) that also promotes clean, renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, hydroelectric and, especially, nuclear.

For a president who boasts about transparency, the public shouldn't have to dig through budget numbers and analyze charts to figure out his hidden agenda.

The administration must change course and immediately finalize the new 2010 offshore drilling plan that opens as many new areas as possible for energy production. With our

economy and national security on the line, there is absolutely no justification for this administration to continue blocking progress.

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