

## Testimony Before the Committee on Natural Resources

Rep. Dana Rohrabacher

February 24, 2009

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, I appreciate this opportunity to testify on an issue that deserves a much more serious discussion than it has been given for these last four decades.

Let me preface my remarks by noting that I am a surfer. I was proud to be the best surfer in Congress until another one was elected, Brian Bilbray. And now that Duncan Hunter, yet another surfer, has been elected, I am rightfully the third best surfer in Congress. However, it has been agreed to that I am now chairman of the unofficial yet powerful Surfers Caucus. With that said, I love the ocean, and preserving it is a high priority for me. I am also a scuba diver, and if I thought offshore drilling imperiled the ocean, I would oppose offshore drilling. But that is simply not true.

Decades ago there were a few well-published accidents that led to oil spills. 1969 was a long time ago. We shouldn't be basing our judgments on what is important for our people or what is good for the environment based on what was done with technology that was put to use in 1969. That was probably technology that was developed long before 1969. The technology since those days has dramatically improved. Hurricanes can go right through our offshore operations and the Gulf of Mexico without one drop of oil being spilled. But even with the old technology, the chances of an oil spill are much more ominous by tanker-delivered oil than that which is extrapolated by offshore rigs. In my own district, which has had offshore drilling for more than 30 years, there have been no significant problems with these offshore rigs. Yet, shortly after I was elected, there was a major oil spill... from a tanker! And remember, the more you say you can't drill, and the more the environmental radicals prevent us from doing that offshore oil drilling, the more oil we have had to deliver by tanker! They ironically made it more likely to have oil spills off California and off my district. So those who claim the mantle of environmental champion and aggressively oppose offshore oil drilling have ironically made oil spills more likely.

Furthermore, by making us more dependent on foreign production, which is not encumbered in many of these countries by the same safety and environmental standards, which I support, we essentially increase the overall pollution of the planet. Again turning everything on its head, the environmentalists are ending up arguing for something that hurts the environment when looked at in a rational discussion. So the environmental consequences of restricting offshore oil drilling and gas development have been exactly opposite to the approach that we were lead to believe. Having scuba dived, which I have below and around offshore rigs California's southern coast, I can assure you the local fish are healthy and plentiful. Their natural instincts, which would drive them away if something was going wrong with their body, their natural instincts I believe are better than the political instincts of those who have been in the forefront of the fight against offshore oil drilling. But the economic consequences of banning new offshore oil and gas drilling also need to be addressed.

One of the reasons our economy, I believe, has been faltering is that it has been weakened in part by the transfer of wealth that comes from buying oil and gas from overseas, when we could produce that same energy domestically from our own offshore oil reserves. Just off the coast of California, there are enormous untapped oil and gas reserves. The *low* estimate—and again, they have made estimates like this which were low estimates in the Gulf of Mexico and found it to be much more oil than what the low estimate was—the low estimate is 9 billion barrels of oil as well as vast deposits of clean burning natural gas. At forty to fifty dollars a barrel—which I believe is what we are going to come down to, when things all balance out in the market place—at forty to fifty dollars a barrel, that represents a value offshore of California, at perhaps *five hundred billion* dollars! *Five hundred billion dollars* of wealth and again, that is a low estimate. Why are the American people being denied this wealth when of course, not developing this energy of course put us at greater environmental risk? Why are we denying this to our people at a time of hardship?

The federal government—as well as state and local governments—sorely need new sources of revenue. It's right there! Denying America the benefits of our own country's oil and gas deposits is a sin against our people and it's bad environmental policy to boot. The real issue I believe that has been the driving force all these decades, that has led to the restriction of offshore oil and gas deposits and again, certainly not the driving force certainly hasn't really been the environment as I have just stated, it certainly hasn't been the economy. What has been the driving force that has prevented our people from having this wealth to build schools, to provide healthcare, to make sure that we didn't have to ruin our economy by buying this oil and fuel overseas. What has been the driving force? The view. It's the view. I'm sorry, maybe the view is important. That might be environmentally sensitive. But to be really concerned about the view, we have got some more serious things to be concerned about. *However*, even with that issue, let me suggest, that perhaps we could, require a better looking *façade* on the part of offshore rigs.

In Long Beach they have beautiful facades and no one complains, and I will tell you right now if we would not be developing our offshore oil rigs off of city of Long Beach, that city would go belly up economically! So let's require the facades look beautiful, let's paint them in green trees and or whatever would be make environmentalists happy. No, I would suggest that we require better looking offshore oil drilling rigs and let me also note we can put well heads on under the water now. Again, I am a scuba diver, a lot can be done that wasn't done in 1969 with technology that had been developed in the forties. The fact is that we can have underwater well heads that have almost no chance of spilling even in the middle of a Hurricane and even in the middle of the Gulf. So it is time for us to quit worrying about the view, start standing up for the economy and the environment but also stand up for our people who have a *right* to the benefit of this vast wealth that is off shore and especially that's true in this time of economic hardship. Thank you Mr. Chairman for letting me present my case.