



AMERICANS *for* TAX REFORM

17 March 2010

Dear Representative:

On behalf of Americans for Tax Reform, and millions of taxpayers nationwide, **I urge you to co-sign Representative Parker Griffith's (AL-5) letter to Secretary Ken Salazar of the Department of the Interior concerning the Minerals Management Services' decision to withhold information regarding public comments received on the five-year plan for new offshore oil and gas drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS).**

Looking to gauge public opinion regarding OCS development, last February the new administration extended the Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program public comment period. Secretary of the Department of the Interior Ken Salazar deemed this comment extension vital because "the additional time we are providing will give states, stakeholders, and affected communities the opportunity to provide input on the future of our offshore areas."

And the public responded, in overwhelmingly numbers, submitting more than 530,000 comments. A month after the comment period ended, there had been no public disclosure from the Minerals Management Service (MMS) leading American Solutions to submit a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request with the Department of the Interior. Another month passed without the MMS explaining the comment period's findings.

A second FOIA uncovered internal emails which revealed that the Department of the Interior had been deliberately hiding evidence that the American people support offshore drilling by a 2 to 1 margin. Ignoring public opinion, Secretary Salazar announced last week that he would not release a new OCS drilling plan until 2012, delaying any prospect of development by at least two years.

Certainly the American people's broad support of OCS drilling is due to the positive economic impact it would have. Authorizing OCS drilling would create more than 870,000 jobs which would add an additional \$270 billion in annual economic growth. Effectively preventing job creation and economic growth, denying OCS development will only prolong the current economic downturn and high levels of unemployment.

If you would like to be added as a cosponsor to this bill, please have your staff contact Madeline M. Barter at Madeline.Barter@mail.house.gov by close of business Thursday. For more information, contact ATR federal affairs manager Brian Johnson at bjohnson@atr.org.

Onward,

Grover G. Norquist

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