



July 10, 2009

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue

Dear Mr. President:

This coming Tuesday, Americans will mark the first anniversary of an historic change in our nation's energy policy, one that came in the form of the July 14, 2008 lifting of the executive branch's 18-year-old, unilateral ban on the responsible development of energy resources along much of America's outer continental shelf (OCS). First imposed by President George H. W. Bush in 1990, the moratorium had remained the official policy of the White House for nearly two decades—surviving Republican and Democratic administrations intact even as the price of oil increased by 600 percent in that time, and America's dependence on foreign shipments of that oil nearly doubled.

Unfortunately, nearly a full year since that moratorium was retired, American consumers today find themselves no closer to accessing these abundant, homegrown energy resources than they were last July. That's true despite the late-September expiration of Congress's own separate ban on safe and responsible energy exploration offshore, one that had been renewed reflexively for 27 consecutive years prior to 2008.

But not only have the American people yet to see those events translate into real, forward-leaning progress on this critical issue, they've actually witnessed new obstacles erected over the past year that have even further separated themselves and their families from the affordable energy resources they demand, have sought and rightfully own. These embargoes of American energy supplies represent failed policies of the past, Mr. President—and they need to stop.

Consider the events of the past six months. In February, barely two weeks on the job as our nation's new Interior secretary, Ken Salazar rescinded 77 already-awarded leases on 130,000 acres of energy-rich land in Utah—areas the Bureau of Land Management later suggested “may be appropriate” to “reinstate.” That same month, Mr. Salazar shut down an oil shale leasing program that had begun to make serious strides toward more cleanly and efficiently producing American oil from shale—a potential recoverable resource three times the size of Saudi Arabia's oil supplies. And finally, the secretary announced that a new offshore energy plan—written in the months after Congress allowed its offshore ban to expire—would have to wait an additional six months before his department would even consider looking at it again.

On July 14th of last year, we had a five-year OCS energy plan in place—one that was set to last until a new plan could be undertaken. But in April, a court in DC took the unprecedented step of completely throwing out the current policy governing our nation’s offshore energy program—casting doubt on whether future energy exploration could take place in Alaska, and even if current exploration can continue in the Gulf of Mexico. Plainly put, we currently have no direct means in place whereby domestic energy can be leased for production in any of the waters of the United States.

Taken separately, each of these events has cost the American people millions of units of usable energy, and potentially billions of dollars in lost wages, revenues and royalties. Taken together, they represent critical points along a troubling arc of activity that, more often than not, has appeared to rise and fall in favor of narrow special interests, and against those whose quality of life and living standards depend on reasonable access to affordable and secure energy. The United States cannot meet your goal, Mr. President, of “reducing our dependence on foreign oil,” if we refuse to allow our people to work toward producing more of it here ourselves.

Executive bans may be lifted, and congressional ones may have lapsed. But make no mistake: a de facto ban on more than 1.2 billion acres of energy-rich submerged land remains very much in place. And its consequences are every bit as severe as those associated with its statutory predecessors. The United States needs to end its embargo against its own oil supplies—both in policy, and in practice.

In 2008, with oil cresting at \$144 a barrel and gasoline comfortably situated above \$4 a gallon, the American people took their frustrations to Washington—and produced extraordinary changes in our nation’s energy policy as a result. Now, a year later, it’s our intention to enlist those same Americans once more to demand these changes are pursued in practice. We ask for the assistance of your administration in this effort.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Pyle, President, Institute for Energy Research

Dan Varroney, Senior Vice President, American Solutions for Winning the Future

Roy Innis, National Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Congress for Racial Equality

Niger Innis, National Spokesperson, Congress on Racial Equality

Grover Norquist, President, Americans for Tax Reform

Fred L. Smith, Jr., President, Competitive Enterprise Institute

David Holt, President, Consumer Energy Alliance

Karen Kerrigan, President and CEO, Small Business & Entrepreneurship Council

Brian Johnson, Executive Director, Alliance for Worker Freedom

Tim Phillips, President, Americans for Prosperity
Susan A. Carleson, Chairman and CEO, American Civil Rights Union
George Landrith, President, Frontiers of Freedom
Duane Parde, President, National Taxpayers Union
Amy Ridenour, President, The National Center for Public Policy Research
Andrew Langer, President, Institute for Liberty
David A. Ridenour, Chairman, Americans for the Preservation of Liberty
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