

**WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-5) released the following statement today on the Republican drilling bill – the Restarting American Offshore Leasing Now Act:**

“All Americans are concerned about high gas prices and the growing cost they are imposing on our families. We should also be concerned that those high prices might stall our economic recovery.

“So what can we do to reduce the burden, both for families and for our economy as a whole?

“I support safe, responsible drilling. So does President Obama: his administration has already set us on course to re-issue three out of four of the leases in question in this bill. Domestic drilling is definitely part of the solution to meeting our energy needs.

“But I also know that offering drilling as the only solution is simply not up to the scale of the challenge we face. Consider that the United States already produces about 1.5 million more barrels of oil per day than it did in 2005. And last year under President Obama’s watch, domestic oil production rose to its highest level since 2003. If Republicans were right, that increased production would lower prices—but in fact, oil reached a record of \$147 per barrel during the same period.

“Consider the fact that Canada, unlike the U.S., produces about 1.1 million more barrels of oil than it consumes each day. Canada produces far more oil than we do—and if Republicans were right, Canadian gas prices wouldn’t be rising at the same rate as ours. But they are—they’re feeling the effects, just as we are.

“So while I am a strong supporter of drilling, and making use of our natural resources, the fact remains that the issuing of four leases, even in the very near term, will have little to no impact

on gas prices today.

“In the wake of the devastating BP Gulf oil spill, we need to focus on responsible drilling as we work to increase production. We should not auction off more leases to oil companies without adequate consideration of whether offshore drilling in those locations is safe and without environmental consequences.

“That’s a reckless course to take, especially when the effect on today’s gas prices is essentially nonexistent. While the American people want us to do everything in our power to lower gas prices, they also don’t want us to set up a process that could lead to another BP Gulf oil spill.

“I believe we can drill and do so responsibly, and we can expedite leases responsibly. Rather than Republicans’ one-dimensional approach of simply issuing new leases, let’s also ensure that oil and gas companies are diligent about producing on the leases they already own. Let’s expedite leases without disregarding the environmental impacts. Let’s invest in clean energy technology and efficiency to break our oil addiction—not defund those investments, as Republicans demand. Let’s crack down on the financial speculation that drives gas prices up for American families.

“And—when even Speaker Boehner agrees that the oil companies ‘ought to be paying their fair share’ —let’s end unjustifiable subsidies to some of the world’s most profitable companies, subsidies that are only driving our nation deeper into debt.

“That’s what a real, responsible energy policy would look like—not this bill. I would have supported it if amendments had passed to ensure environmental and safety reviews to prevent another oil spill, and to ensure that offshore drilling does not conflict with military training operations off our coasts. But because Republicans rejected those amendments, this bill remained flawed, and I voted against it.”