

Floor Statement of Rep. Peter DeFazio
Safe Climate Caucus
November 19, 2013

I thank the gentleman. I was listening with interest to some of the statements made earlier in the debate about the administration deliberately restraining the oil and gas industry in this country. Actually the facts belie those statements.

The federal lands oil production is growing faster than that on private lands. Plus 30, plus 35, obviously they start with a larger base, but still it is growing faster. So that hardly shows any deliberate attempt by the Obama administration to limit this production.

And then, you know, again, they talked about, you know, this President had not leased an adequate amount of land, but if you look, these little photos are the former president George Bush, and when the lines start to go up, these are the current President Barack Obama. And onshore oil production on federal lands is up 35%.

So let's deal with what the real intent here is. The Obama administration has an all-of-the-above strategy; they are trying to produce these resources responsibly. The other side of the aisle would have us believe that environmental laws and other restrictions and an intentional campaign by the Obama administration is making us vulnerable to foreign influence, whereas actually our imports were at the lowest level in recent history in the last year. We are producing more and more of our own oil and headed toward self-sufficiency.

But we also have to deal with climate change, and we also have to deal with prices to consumers.

Now, this legislation, we are actually celebrating Thanksgiving a week early, I would call the bill a turkey, but it's not just a turkey. It's leftovers from turkey day, because we have actually passed this

legislation previously and it went nowhere previously, as will this legislation here today.

But they want to pretend that this somehow will benefit consumers and somehow there is a campaign by the Obama administration to restrain the supply.

Nothing could be further from the truth. I'll have an amendment later. If we wanted to drive down prices at the pump tomorrow by seventy cents, pretty simple, just stop the speculation on Wall Street, but I'll talk about that more later.

There are a number of provisions that are egregious – don't have time to go into all of them – but you know, a few things, as I mentioned earlier, basically do away with environmental protections. Muzzle the public's voice in terms of them appealing decisions by the distant federal government to develop in their backyard or next door.

To elevate oil and gas drilling to the predominant use on any federal public lands. Yes, predominant use-- over and above hunting, fishing, recreation, anything else, oil and gas is predominant. The President also said we ought to look at these parcels, before we lease them. That's something they didn't do in the Bush Era. We have 25-year-old land-use plans at many of these agencies; they are understaffed, they're behind. They have revised their land-use plans in a long time. A lot of things have happened in the West in 25 years, and it might be that there's now a ski resort next to an area that was previously available or potentially available for oil and gas leasing.

The Obama administration says we ought to go out and look; see how it's going to impact other activities that have come to the floor in the past 25 years. They are being criticized for that. That does take a little bit of time, but they're saying some states are leasing private lands and allow private lands to go forward in 10 days. These aren't private lands! These are the lands of the people of the United States of

America! I think a little more due diligence is in order. We don't want to mimic a state that says: "Oh, you want to drill there? Oh, okay, here you go. No one else gets to say anything about it; it's your land. You go right ahead."

Now, then there's one—this is amazing, this is kind of a fun math issue—they say that the industry can nominate land, which is the current law. But they're saying the government must lease 25% of whatever the industry chooses to nominate in a given year. So, there are 130 million acres available for oil and gas leasing in the United States, predominantly in the West.

So, first year, the industry nominates 130 million acres, that means the Department of the Interior needs to offer 32 million acres to lease. Well, next year, we've only got 100 million left. So, they get 25% of that—that's 25 million acres. As you can figure it out, we're sort of infinitely headed towards zero here. I don't know if we'd ever get to zero, but it would be ever and ever smaller increment that we were leasing here.

And yet, there are 25 million acres that the industry has under lease that they haven't yet developed. But they can get this astonishing increase.

I was thinking about bringing a map of all the leasable land, but it would have been difficult to produce, but you can get it in your imagination. So, let's deal with the real problems before us. If we're going to produce energy on federal lands, make sure there's no real conflict. Let's keep the multiple-use concept. I think most members of the public support that, and not give oil and gas a predominant use. Let's also keep in mind that we have to look at alternative energy development on federal lands, so that we can deal with climate change, which some of us believe in. But this leftover turkey proposal will pass the House—of course—but that will be the last that anyone hears of it. Happy Thanksgiving.