

*Washington, DC* - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today released the following statement regarding the Minerals Management Service's announcement of a five year plan for off-shore drilling in the U.S. Hinchey has helped lead the fight in Congress to compel the oil and gas industry to drill on the 68 million acres of U.S. land they've already leased before leasing and drilling other parts of the country.

"The five year off-shore drilling plan that the Minerals Management Service (MMS) announced today is nothing short of a slap in the face to the American people. This administration has consistently operated in the best interests of Big Oil rather than the best interests of the American people. With just four days left before President Bush leaves office, his administration is trying to sneak through a broad plan that would irresponsibly open up enormous swaths of open water off the coasts of the U.S. for drilling.

"What we're seeing is the Bush administration's version of the Teapot Dome scandal. The Bush administration is trying to give control of all the resources owned by the American people to its friends in the oil and gas industry. By doing so, the president is trying to direct all of the benefits and profits from those resources to his friends as well as the Bush family itself on his way out the door. It is unacceptable that the Bush administration is seeking to lease all of these precious acres at a time when oil and gas companies already have control of 68 million acres they've previously leased plus 20 million additional acres in Alaska from which some oil is being exported to other countries.

"The Obama administration cannot begin soon enough. I look forward to using my seats on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and the House Natural Resources Committee to work with President-elect Obama to reverse the extraordinary damage the Bush administration has done to our environment and to set the U.S. on a path to energy independence that is rooted in clean, renewable sources."