

## 68 Million Acres Of Public Land Has Been Leased To Energy Companies, But No Drilling Has Occurred

*Washington, DC* - In an effort to ensure U.S. domestic oil and gas supply increases, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), House Democratic Caucus Chairman Rahm Emanuel (D-IL), Chairman Edward J. Markey (D-MA), and Chairman Nick Rahall (D-WV) today introduced legislation that will help lower gas prices by compelling oil companies to utilize the 68 million acres onshore and offshore that they have already leased, but not used to produce energy.

“With nearly 68 million acres of on-shore and off-shore public land already leased for oil and gas drilling untouched by the energy companies who hold those leases, it’s time for Republicans and oil company executives to stop making the false claim that the U.S. is not making enough land available for energy production,” Hinchey said. “Oil corporations are trying to take control of as much land now during the oil-friendly Bush administration years, but are holding off on drilling to help drive up the price of oil to \$200 or \$300 a barrel so that they can make even greater profits. By stalling energy production, these major energy corporations are cheating the American people out of a domestic oil and natural gas supply, causing prices to unfairly and unnecessarily soar at the pump. The federal government has made tens of millions of acres available for oil and gas development. It’s the energy companies that are refusing to produce and now we will make them pay if they continue to refuse to increase our domestic supply.”

Currently, oil companies are not producing oil or gas on the 68 million acres of federal land already under their control. Of the 47.5 million acres of federal lands leased onshore by oil and gas companies, only about 13 million acres are actually producing oil and gas. Offshore, only 10.5 million of the 44 million leased acres are currently producing oil or gas. These unused areas could produce an additional 4.8 million barrels of oil and 44.7 billion cubic feet of natural gas each day, nearly double current domestic oil production. That would nearly double total U.S. oil production, and is more than six times the estimated potential peak production from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR).

Hinchey, Emanuel, and Markey introduced legislation that would assess a fee on land which energy companies have leased but are not using for production. This fee would escalate if leases go unused over the course of several years. Revenue raised from these fees will go towards solar power and other renewable energy and energy efficiency investments, as well as

the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Rahall also introduced legislation that Hinchey supports, which employs a "use it or lose it" tactic that would compel oil and gas companies to either produce or give up the federal onshore and offshore leases they are stockpiling by barring the companies from obtaining any more leases unless they can demonstrate that they are producing oil and gas, or are diligently developing the leases they already hold.

"All we keep hearing is that Congress needs to allow more and more drilling. Congress has already made the land available to do so, but it's the oil and gas companies that are holding up the process," Hinchey said. "The measures we're introducing will help increase the supply side of the equation, while we continue to work on the demand side through increased fuel efficiency standards, tax credits for alternative energy solutions, and other efficiency and alternative incentives and funding."

Hinchey is a member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and the House Natural Resources Committee.