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Pro-Jobs Energy Legislation Passes House

As gas prices continue to rise as we head into the summer driving season, families across the Inland Empire will be forced to fork over more of their hard-earned money just to fill their gas tanks. Now more than ever, we need an all-of-the-above energy plan that includes promoting the development of clean and alternative energy sources such as natural gas and clean coal technologies as well as utilizing resources here at home. This week, the House of Representatives considered two pieces of legislation that would increase U.S. energy production and create jobs.

In February 2012, the Obama Administration and Mexico reached an agreement establishing a framework to guide energy development along the maritime border in the Gulf of Mexico. On Thursday, the House passed legislation to enact this agreement, which would open up areas for development that, according to the State Department and Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, contain an estimated 172 million barrels of oil and 304 billion cubic feet of natural gas. Currently, there are 67 active lease blocks held by nine companies on the U.S. portion of the area just waiting for the agreement to be enacted. It is my hope that the Senate will take up this legislation to get this exploration underway to improve our energy independence and create good-paying American jobs.

In addition, the House passed legislation that would remove federal obstacles that are blocking development of energy resources and the creation of hundreds of thousands of new American jobs. Last year, the President implemented a five-year leasing plan which shuts off 85% of offshore areas to energy production. This plan will stifle job creation and weaken our energy independence by continuing our reliance on foreign and unstable sources of energy. The bill passed by the House today would open up those areas with the most oil and natural gas resources, which a recent study has shown this legislation could create up to 1.2 million jobs long-term, and the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office has stated this legislation would generate \$1.5 billion over ten years. In addition, reforms are included in the legislation to strengthen safety, accountability, and ethical standards of offshore energy exploration operations.

With 21st Century technologies and the strictest environmental standards in the world, America can produce more of our own energy and protect our environment at the same time. I will continue to work in Congress to increase access to American-made energy that will create new job opportunities here at home, help reduce the burden of high gas prices on families here in the Inland Empire, and lessen our dependence on foreign oil.

House Passes Bill Extending Whistleblower Protections to Victims of Sexual Assault in the Military

Sexual violence in the military is a disturbing and, unfortunately, growing problem. According to data from the Department of Defense the number of reported sexual assaults rose 64% from 2006 to 2011. However, the actual number of assaults that have occurred is much higher as fewer than 20% of assaults are reported. The fear of retaliation for reporting these horrific acts is far too common,

discouraging victims from coming forward. It has been reported that 62% of servicemembers who have been assaulted have experienced some form of retaliation. This is unacceptable.

This week, the House passed a measure to extend whistleblower protections to victims of sexual violence in the military in order to encourage safe reporting. Specifically, the bill would require the Inspectors General of the military departments to investigate acts of retaliation against servicemembers who report such heinous acts. I strongly supported this legislation, which is a critical step to eliminating the scourge of sexual assault and violence in the Armed Services.

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