



Offshore drilling / Worst time ever

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This newspaper has editorialized against offshore oil drilling for at least three decades - probably since it was first proposed.

The main reason has remained unchanged: An oil spill could devastate New Jersey's summer tourism industry, fouling its beaches and waters and driving away visitors.

Proponents of drilling in the Atlantic Ocean used to claim a spill was so unlikely that the possibility was irrelevant. Then the Deepwater Horizon gushed millions of gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico in 2010.

A search for offshore oil in the Atlantic in the early 1980s failed to find enough to make drilling worth it. Since then, every U.S. president - including alleged friends of oil corporations, such as Presidents George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush - have supported or let stand a moratorium against drilling off the East Coast.

Until now.

Who could have guessed that President Barack Obama's administration, known for its subsidies of green-energy projects that often fail, would be the one to push for energy drilling offshore? A few years ago, Obama called for "an all-of-the-above strategy for the 21st century that develops every source of American-made energy."

Last week, the drilling component of that strategy came to Atlantic City for an information session on plans to lease the rights to drill for oil and natural gas offshore from Delaware to Florida. In about a year, the federal government expects to identify the best places to lease and drill.

Even though the nearest sites are 100 miles off New Jersey, spilled oil could drift here and obliterate a shore tourism industry worth \$17 billion a year to the four oceanfront counties. But now there's another compelling reason not to drill in the Atlantic Ocean: The United States is in the early stages of a long period of abundance - some would say glut - of oil and natural gas.

Crude-oil stocks are at their highest level in at least eight decades.

Land-based drilling rigs are being shut down.

The energy industry is pressing the U.S. government to allow it to sell lots of this oil and gas to other nations.

The past argument that drilling offshore would help the U.S. achieve energy independence no longer holds water.

Drilling advocates can't even argue the leases would get money for government, since these days they'd sell for record low prices.

Maybe that's what politicians want.

http://www.pressofatlanticcity.com/opinion/editorials/offshore-drilling-worst-time-ever/article_9be0a6d8-da63-51a4-93e0-9c65a4d87a59.html?mode=story