

So here is a large part of the reason—as shown right here on the chart—why there is no drilling off the west coast of Florida in the Gulf of Mexico. The importance of what is called the Eglin Air Force Base Gulf Test and Training Range has been emphasized in the letter that was received by the Senate Armed Services Committee, signed by the Secretary of Defense, Don Rumsfeld. That letter was delivered to the committee last November, in which he says: You cannot have oil and gas rigs out here where we are testing and training sophisticated weapons systems, and where we are training our pilots—Air Force and Navy pilots—and where we now will have the F-35 all-pilot training for the new Joint Strike Fighter, the F-35 for all branches of service, all out here because of that restricted space. So Secretary Rumsfeld made it very clear: You cannot have oil and gas rigs.

I remember the Senator from New York, Mr. SCHUMER, one day said: Why should Florida be protected? Here, this is the reason. This is the historical reason, in addition to the reasons of the environment, as well as the economy of Florida in protecting our tourism industry.

So this is what we are dealing with, as shown on this chart. All of the yellow on this chart off the State of Florida is going to be protected until the year 2022. That is three planning periods of 5 years each. That is 15 years after the planning period of 2007 kicks in. All of that area—which is 125 miles from Fort Walton, it is 100 miles from Perdido Key, 100 miles off of the Alabama coast right here. Then it comes around, and it then follows this critical line, this black line that is called the military mission line, a military mission line that was established in 1981 by the Department of Defense in that they said they wanted no drilling east of that line. Therefore, that line becomes the critical line, of which you see that most of the area of Florida, then, is protected from drilling. And that is all the way through the year 2022.

That area, by the way—from this point off of Clearwater, which is in the Tampa Bay area—is 235 miles due west of the Tampa Bay area beaches. For Naples, it is in excess of 300 miles. No drilling. So you can see the protection for Florida also happens to be the protection for the U.S. military in these ranges.

Now, we have had people come to the floor and say they are concerned about this going down to the House. The House-passed bill basically lifts the moratorium for drilling off the Outer Continental Shelf of the entire United States—the Pacific coast, the Atlantic coast, and so forth.

I want to speak about the assurances I have been given when this bill will leave here and go to the House of Representatives. But let me tell you why this bill only deals with the Gulf of Mexico. From Florida's standpoint,

from the military's standpoint, from the Nation's defense standpoint, we do not want to lift the moratorium and have drilling off the east coast of Florida and the rest of the southeastern United States because, look right here on this chart. Here is another major Air Force and Navy training area off the northeast coast of Florida and off the east coast of Georgia. In addition, right there is a place called Cape Canaveral. The Cape Canaveral Air Force Station is where we launch our rockets to put all of our satellites, our defense satellites, into equatorial orbit.

You can't have oil rigs out here where you are dropping the first stages of the expendable booster rockets that are putting our highly sophisticated and highly classified defense payloads into equatorial orbit. Just to the north of Cape Canaveral is a place called the Kennedy Space Center. It happens to have launch pad 39A and launch pad 39B from which we launch the space shuttle and, after the year 2012, it is estimated we will launch the new space vehicle called the Crew Exploration Vehicle. You can't have oil rigs out here where we are dropping the solid rocket boosters from the space shuttle when we launch, those two big candlesticks on either side of the external tank of the space shuttle. After they have expended their fuel 2 minutes into flight, they separate from the space shuttle and parachute back into the Atlantic Ocean. They are then brought back in, refurbished, and reused. You can't have oil rigs out here.

So as people talk about wanting drilling off the east coast of Florida, which this legislation in front of us does not address but the House bill does address, you can't do that out here with an interest of the Nation at stake—the military preparedness plus the defense of this country, with the important payloads that we are launching out of the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, as well as the Kennedy Space Center. When people say that this legislation we are passing in the Senate does not address protections of the east coast, the east coast isn't a threat. Right now the east coast is under a moratorium until the year 2012. That is not where the threat is. The threat is here in the Gulf of Mexico. That is why we have the legislation before us that we do. That is why this Senator is coming to the floor to announce my support for this legislation, which I have helped craft and on which I have waited until today, until I had assurances that this legislation was not going to be in any significant way changed when it leaves this Chamber and goes down to the House.

What are those assurances? I have been authorized to say from the majority leader, Senator FRIST—and I am reading from an e-mail to me. This is a quote Senator FRIST sent to me today—

The Senate bill is a carefully crafted compromise and I believe it represents what is achievable in the Senate this year. I will not

bring a bill back before the Senate that does not provide adequate protections to the State of Florida. I look forward to working with both Florida Senators to achieve this goal.

Yesterday, I spoke personally to Senator FRIST on the telephone. He told me he would do everything within his ability to keep it to the Senate version when the bill returns to the Senate. That is a pretty good assurance for this Senator to protect the interests of Florida.

I went to our leader on this side of the aisle, the Democratic leader, and Senator REID has written a letter to me:

Dear Senator Nelson:

It is my expectation that the House of Representatives will accept S. 3711 as passed by the Senate without amending it and without modifying it in a conference committee. If the House does not accept the Senate bill as passed, I will join other Senators and Senator Nelson and produce the votes to sustain a filibuster to prevent the passage of the bill when it would return to the Senate.

That is the end of the quote from Senator REID's letter.

Around here, you have to take a man at his word. I accept the word and the assurances of the two great leaders of our two great parties in protecting the interests of Florida. I am prepared to come and support this legislation and to thank the leadership on both sides as they have worked with the two Senators from Florida to try to do what is right for the country.

In the legislation that addresses the drilling, there is another important component for Florida; that is, there are a few leases out in this area from years past, decades past, that have never been drilled because they have never gotten the permits because of all that we have been going through, keeping these waters protected in a moratorium. Senator LANDRIEU has crafted a portion of the bill that revenue will go to four Gulf States from the revenue generated to the Federal Government from new leases. The interest of Florida, since there won't be drilling, is to get rid of the ancient leases that are never going to be drilled. So there is a provision in the legislation that will allow the swapping of these leases by their value for new leases in the area that can be drilled in what is called lease sale 181, and other leases in the central and western Gulf of Mexico, new leases that we want to be drilled where a swap would occur.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority's time has expired.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. People say that is voluntary for the oil companies.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the minority has expired.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. I ask unanimous consent for 3 additional minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. You would ask, if it is voluntary, why would they do it? Because there is a financial incentive for oil companies who want to pay for new drilling in 181 or elsewhere