

Huffman, Levin to introduce bills to protect Pacific, Arctic oceans from offshore drilling

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To mark World Oceans Day, Congressmen Jared Huffman (D-San Rafael) and Mike Levin (D- San Juan Capistrano) announced they will introduce a package of legislation to permanently protect the West Coast and Arctic Ocean from the dangers of fossil fuel drilling.

The package of legislation includes Rep. Huffman's Stop Arctic Ocean Drilling Act and North Pacific Ocean Protection Act and Rep. Levin's Southern California Coast and Ocean Protection Act.

Fishing, tourism, and recreation along California's coastline support nearly 600,000 jobs and roughly \$42.3 billion in economy activity. More than 4 million gallons of oil have been released into the Pacific Ocean as a result of the 1969 Santa Barbara blowout, the Refugio Beach spill of 2015, and other leaks from oil rig and pipeline activity, affecting more than 935 square miles of ocean.

"The risks of offshore drilling for our ocean-dependent economies and marine ecosystems are astronomical. The science and public opinion are clear: we must ramp up the transition to a clean energy future, and we can't let ourselves get locked into decades of more dangerous fossil fuel drilling off our coasts," said Rep. Huffman.

“We’re using every tool to help coastal communities that are facing sea level rise, increase in severe storms, and other climate impacts. Our bills go hand-in-hand with other necessary actions to reduce emissions and invest in renewable energy – all while reducing risks and making sure that our coasts are clean, safe, and available to everyone in America, not just a sacrificial lamb for the fossil fuel industry.”

“Southern California’s economy depends heavily on the vitality of its world-renowned beaches, cherished marine life, and ocean-dependent businesses that drive tourism and other activities. The ramifications of offshore drilling are too devastating to ignore, and I will always oppose oil companies’ efforts to exploit and damage our coastline.

Our bills put the California environment and coastal economy first. I stand with the overwhelming majority of Californians who want to protect our coastline. Rep. Huffman and I look forward to moving these bills through the legislative process and building support,” said Rep. Levin.

The Stop Arctic Ocean Drilling Act would make the Arctic Ocean off-limits to any future drilling proposals by prohibiting any new or renewed leases for the exploration, development, or production of oil or natural gas in the Outer Continental Shelf.

The North Pacific Ocean Protection Act would prohibit the Department of the Interior from issuing a lease for the exploration, development, or production of oil or natural gas in specified areas of the Outer Continental Shelf ensuring a sustainable future for coastal communities and the millions of jobs and billions of dollars in wages that depend on healthy oceans and coasts.

The Southern California Coast and Ocean Protection Act would prohibit any new leasing for the exploration, development, or production of oil or natural gas along the Southern California coast, from San Diego to the northern border of San Luis Obispo County.

What Supporters Are Saying:

“Protecting our coasts from the disastrous impacts of offshore drilling remains a vital step toward solving the climate crisis and protecting millions of U.S. jobs that rely on a clean coast economy,” said Mike Messmer, acting campaign director at Oceana. “Oceana applauds Congressman Huffman and Congressman Levin for introducing this legislation to protect our coastal communities from dirty and dangerous offshore drilling. From toxic oil spills that cause economic and ecological devastation, to the acceleration of the climate crisis facing our world today, we simply cannot afford more drilling for oil and gas. The solution is clear: we must prevent new offshore drilling and invest in clean, renewable energy sources to create a viable clean energy future.”

“This important legislation will protect our environment, economy, climate and way of life from the harmful effects of offshore oil and gas development. The Surfrider Foundation urges members of congress to support these and other bills to permanently prohibit new offshore drilling in U.S. waters,” said Pete Stauffer, Ocean Protection Manager, Surfrider Foundation.

“The Business Alliance for Protecting the Pacific Coast (BAPPC) is a proud supporter of the Southern California Coast and Ocean Protection Act. Our membership in California, Oregon, and Washington represents more than 8,100 business voices who believe offshore oil & gas development is bad for business, and that it poses an unacceptable risk to our livelihoods, employees, communities, and environment,” said Grant Bixby, Founding Member, Business Alliance for Protecting the Pacific Coast.

“California’s vibrant coastal economy relies on clean beaches and a healthy ocean. The Southern California Coast and Ocean Protection Act safeguards against offshore drilling’s consequences, such as oil spills and worsening climate impacts which all pose significant risks to coastal communities and small businesses. It is imperative to implement permanent protections and we extend our gratitude to Rep. Levin for leading the charge and safeguarding our precious coast,” said Vipe Desai, Executive Director, Surf Industry Members Association.

“Congressman Jared Huffman and Congressman Mike Levin know that we must invest in a just transition away from fossil fuels for our communities, for our ocean, and for our planet. Their legislation to stop new leasing in the Arctic, the North Pacific, and the Southern California Coast is a step in the right direction to ensuring that the ocean is leveraged as a source of climate solutions instead of harmful emissions. We are grateful for their ocean climate leadership and for their efforts to protect some of our most pristine ocean ecosystems,” said Jean Flemma, Ocean Defense Initiative.

“In a climate emergency, we simply cannot afford to hand over our coastal waters to polluters for new drilling. We won’t risk local economies wildlife and habitat for dangerous and dirty fossil fuel extraction. These bills would make significant strides in protecting the West Coast, the Arctic, coastal communities, and fragile ecosystems,” said Valerie Cleland, senior oceans advocate for the Nature program at the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Original cosponsors of the North Pacific Ocean Protection Act include Representatives Mike Levin (CA-49), Nanette Barragan (CA-44), Suzanne Bonamici (OR-01), Ro Khanna (CA-17), Gerry Connolly (VA-11), Sara Jacobs (CA-51), Derek Kilmer (WA-06), Earl Blumenauer (OR-03), and Julia Brownley (CA-26).

Original cosponsors of the Stop Arctic Ocean Drilling Act include Representatives Mike Levin (CA-49), Andy Kim (NJ-03) Nanette Barragan (CA-44), Suzanne Bonamici (OR-01), Ro Khanna (CA-17), Gerry Connolly (VA-11), Don Beyer (VA-08), Earl Blumenauer (OR-03), and Julia Brownley (CA-26).

Original cosponsors of the California Coast and Ocean Protection Act include Representatives Jared Huffman (CA-02), Sara Jacobs (CA-51), Raul Grijalva (AZ-07), Nanette Barragan (CA-44), Eric Swalwell (CA-14), Deborah Ross (NC-02), Juan Vargas (CA-52), Julia Brownley (CA-26), Ro Khanna (CA-17), Gerry Connolly (VA-11), Ted Lieu (CA-36), and Brad Sherman (CA-32).

The legislative package is endorsed by Natural Resources Defense Council, Surfrider Foundation, Ocean Defense Initiative, Oceana, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center, League of Conservation Voters, Earthjustice, World Wildlife Fund, Cook Inletkeeper, and Sierra Club.

Ocean Conservancy endorses Southern California Coast and Ocean Protection Act and North Pacific Ocean Protection Act.