

January 24, 2023

Dear members of Congress:

On behalf of our millions of members, we, the undersigned groups, write today to urge you to **vote no on H.R. 21, the *Strategic Production Response Act*** – a red herring piece of legislation that threatens our nation’s treasured federal public lands and waters under the guise of promoting energy security. We also urge you to oppose any amendments that expand fossil fuel development or erode environmental protections.

This bill would require that non-emergency drawdowns of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) be accompanied by a plan to lease a percentage of federal lands for fossil fuel production in line with the percentage of oil scheduled to be released from the SPR, capped at 10%.

Enactment of this bill would have dire implications for federal public lands and waters. As written, the bill permits the leasing plan to include as much as 10% of the federal land and water estate – an unconscionable amount – when SPR drawdowns exceed 10% of reserves. While that may sound like an improbably large amount of oil, it represents less than two days of average U.S. consumption. That puts the tradeoff proposed by this bill in stark relief: the federal government presides over roughly 640 million acres onshore and over 2.5 billion acres in the Outer Continental shelf. 10% of that is 314 million acres – almost twice the size of Texas and six times the combined size of all U.S. national parks. In other words, this bill advances a public land giveaway that could lock in at least a century of oil drilling in response to an SPR drawdown that is truly a drop in the bucket.

And while leasing these lands to oil companies will deny the opportunity to manage them for their climate resilience, cultural importance, and other conservation values, there is also no evidence the fossil fuel industry needs more of them. On Bureau of Land Management lands, for example, roughly 26 million acres are currently under lease to oil and gas companies. Less than half of those acres are producing oil or gas. Offshore, of the roughly 12 million acres under lease, over three quarters sit unused. There is simply no reason for more industry handouts that lock away our shared lands and waters for decades.

Moreover, proponents of the bill may argue that more leasing on federal lands and waters will help shore up American energy security. But it’s our nation’s continued dependence on oil that holds us hostage to global events and global price swings and slows our transition to renewables that provide homegrown energy largely free from swings caused by macroeconomic events and the whims of authoritarian regimes abroad. True energy security for all Americans means transitioning to a 100% clean energy future, not promoting fossil fuel development.

Lastly, this bill poses a severe climate risk. Fossil fuel production on federal public lands and waters already accounts for roughly 25% of our nation’s greenhouse gas emissions. Unfettered oil and gas leasing will compound those emissions and worsen the effects of climate change. And those effects – from wildfires, to droughts, to severe storms, to sea level rise – all make our nation less safe.

This bill isn’t about energy security. It’s about capitalizing on global events to give away more lands and waters to the fossil fuel industry. We urge you to **vote no on H.R. 21** and to oppose harmful amendments.

Sincerely,

Accountable.US
American Friends Service Committee
Azul
Clean Water Action
Climate Hawks Vote
Cook Inletkeeper
Creation Justice Ministries
Defenders of Wildlife
Earthjustice
Earthworks
Endangered Species Coalition
Environment America
Environmental Law & Policy Center
Friends of the Earth
Healthy Ocean Coalition
Hispanic Access Foundation
Inland Ocean Coalition
Interfaith Power & Light

League of Conservation Voters
National Parks Conservation Association
Natural Resources Defense Council
NextGen America
Ocean Conservancy
Ocean Defense Initiative
Oceana
Oil Change International
Partnership for Policy Integrity
Sierra Club
Southern Environmental Law Center
Surfrider Foundation
The Ocean Project
The Wilderness Society
U.S. PIRG
Union of Concerned Scientists
Voices for Progress
Waterway Advocates