

Where the Presidential Candidates Stand on Drilling off NJ's Ocean and Bay Shores

Between now and November, the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at the Richard Stockton College of NJ will publish occasional articles on campaign positions. Our intent is to translate national policy into how it will affect area residents and businesses. Our hope is to provide you, the voters, with information that will help you select your next President.

As the cost of a barrel of oil continues its upward spiral, and the cost of a gallon of gasoline joins it, the anger and frustration of the voters also increases. The presumptive Presidential candidates John McCain and Barack Obama are rolling out plans to address these costs. So too are the Democratic and Republican political parties and their various members. When these ideas come out, the discussion of offshore drilling is always part of the discussion.

For those of us in southern New Jersey, to drill or not to drill raises critical questions. Is it good for South Jersey? Will it provide relief for the high cost of gasoline? If yes, when? Is it environmentally safe? Will it hurt our shoreline, views and marine life? If the decision is made by individual states, can their decisions hurt NJ's shore line?

We lack significant forms of mass transportation to get our casino, tourism, and fishing industry workers to their job sites along the Atlantic Ocean and the Delaware Bay. Commuting is a "must" and not a choice. The cost of gas for commuting becomes a major factor in attracting and maintaining employees. At the same time, our economy in this quadrant of New Jersey is dependent upon the tourists and visitors who partake of our casinos, recreational fishing, beaches, boardwalks and historical sites. Once again, the cost of gasoline will be a driver of the season's success.

The oil industry, its analysts, and the U.S. Minerals Management Service estimates of how much oil and natural gas will be available if exploration and offshore drilling is increased range from modest to quite sizable but the results will take many years to have an effect on the average consumer. Even then, with all the studies and testing and possibility of dry holes, no one today really knows how much will be found offshore or how many years it may take to change what the consumer pays at the pump.

So, with all these questions and concerns affecting both our short-term and long-term lives, where do Senators Obama and McCain stand on this issue of off-shore drilling and the 27-year federal government moratorium that is now in place? Do their political parties back them on their stands?

something of a waste in time and effort and do little to resolve America's broader energy needs..." (*Huffington Post*, June 30, 2008). In his 2000 campaign, McCain supported the moratorium.

Candidate Obama does not agree. He is dedicated to keeping the moratorium on offshore drilling in place because it will not provide short-term relief to consumers and lifting it