

a variety of ways. It requires a comprehensive inventory of the oil and natural gas under the waters of the Outer Continental Shelf to inform decisions about where leasing is likely to be most productive. To improve the efficiency of the permitting process for development on Federal lands and waters, permit coordination offices are reauthorized, and a new coordination office is established for the Alaska region of the Outer Continental Shelf.

Two provisions facilitate the transportation of Alaska's abundant oil and gas resources. The amount of Federal guarantee instruments is increased to support the construction of an Alaska natural gas pipeline and the Trans-Alaska oil pipeline system is exempted from certain requirements that unnecessarily slow the permitting process.

Coproduction of geothermal energy by existing oil and gas leaseholders is encouraged by making leases available for that purpose on a noncompetitive basis.

Finally, the bill will potentially contribute millions to the Federal Treasury by repealing the current law that requires the Secretary of the Interior to give relief from royalty payments to certain offshore oil and gas production. This bill would allow the Secretary to provide such relief in appropriate circumstances, but it would not require such relief. This avoids inappropriate giveaways of taxpayer-owned oil and gas resources to industry when it is unnecessary for us to maintain robust domestic production.

These provisions are drawn almost verbatim from S. 1462 which was reported by our committee on a bipartisan basis in the last Congress. The one significant change is that certain funding for the offshore oil and gas inventory provided by S. 1462 is redirected by the committee in subsequent legislation to be used for research on safety issues related to offshore oil and gas drilling. To avoid spending the same money twice, we have eliminated that funding here so it could be included in offshore safety legislation. At the same time, the bill retains the authorization of significant appropriations to be used for this oil and gas inventory.

The Outer Continental Shelf Reform Act is the other bill I am introducing. It is a verbatim reproduction of S. 3516 which was reported unanimously by our Energy Committee in the last Congress. Because of the widespread support for this bill, I have reintroduced it exactly as reported, since I believe it is a good place to begin our work this year. It will need a bit of updating as we move forward. A few of the provisions have largely been overtaken by events and we have learned from the President's Oil Spill Commission and others about some refinements we should make in this legislation.

I have been having discussions with Senator MURKOWSKI and others who supported last year's bill and I will continue those discussions as we move

forward. I hope we will have the same strong bipartisan support for these efforts as we did last year when we reported this bill during the midst of the worst oilspill in our Nation's history. Our commitment to responsible operations in the gulf and protection of our citizens and communities should be well understood by all.

This bill is intended to respect those who lost their lives in the Deepwater Horizon accident and respect the people of the gulf who have suffered serious economic and emotional harm by doing what we can to create a better future for them. It is the particular responsibility of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources to look at the future of the regulatory agency and the industry it regulates. As I said last year when we introduced this bill, our goal must be, of course, to prevent future disasters, but we can and must do more than that. Congress should create organizational resources and a set of requirements that will have safety and environmental protection and innovation at their core. We should require that both industry and agency employees have the expertise, the experience, and the commitment to quality that is necessary to handle the complex issues involved, and we should set principles in place to create a culture of excellence for the regulatory agency and for the industry that will be a model for the entire world.

Thus, this bill reforms the structure of the offices of the Department of the Interior dealing with offshore oil and gas leasing and development to avoid organizational conflicts of interest. It clarifies the breadth of the Department's responsibilities in managing the resources of the Outer Continental Shelf.

It increases the safety requirements for exploration and well drilling and production. It mandates use of best available technology, an evidentiary safety case, and a risk management system that identifies and addresses hazards in advance and manages for change. It provides for third-party review by qualified parties outside the agency of key equipment and well design.

It addresses the essential need for the Department of the Interior to have in-house research capacity on both the safety and the marine environment issues necessary for the exercise of its regulatory authority. Research departments in these areas will no longer be optional, but are required, and funding is redirected from other areas of research to ensure this will happen.

In order to ensure that the rules are enforced, the bill requires the collection of fees from industry to fully fund the necessary teams of inspectors. It provides for independent investigations of accidents and the sharing of data so that all can learn from mistakes. It also provides the Department of the Interior with adequate time to carry out necessary reviews and it makes the input of other Federal agencies occur

in a transparent way. And it increases the civil and criminal penalties applicable to violations of the law and regulations.

I believe these policies and resources can set us on a new and constructive path toward managing the incredible natural resources we have on the Outer Continental Shelf. We must commit ourselves to the goal of excellence in this important endeavor. The fact that oil is no longer gushing into the Gulf of Mexico in no way diminishes the importance of this work.

Both of these bills address issues of great national importance. We will shortly be scheduling the necessary hearings and preparing these bills for committee consideration. If at all possible, we will do so before the Memorial Day recess. I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and in the rest of the Senate on a bipartisan basis as we have in the past to address the vital issues presented by both of these bills.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, at 12:36 p.m., the Senate recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. WEBB).

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF EDWARD MILTON CHEN TO BE U.S. DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Edward Milton Chen, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of California.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 3 hours of debate equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Iowa is recognized. Mr. GRASSLEY. We are on the nomination; is that right?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in opposition to Magistrate Judge Chen, the President's