

OCPA FaxLine Report

a public policy information service for members of the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, Inc.

Dear OCPA Member:

Wednesday, July 16, 2008

Thank goodness President Bush has decided to lift the executive ban on offshore oil and gas drilling. However, this is only the first step of a two step process. Congress must now act to lift the offshore drilling ban. "Now," notes the President, "the ball is squarely in Congress' court." It's time for some common sense concerning this issue because the automatic default position for most opponents of off-shore drilling is to return to ideas and policies which have been tried and have failed.

Take the idea to return the national speed limit to 55 miles an hour. That law was originally enacted by Congress in 1974 as part of a package of measures which were passed to counter the Arab oil embargo. Milton R. Copulos, Senior Policy Analyst with The Heritage Foundation in 1986, studied the issue extensively and concluded that, "The assumption was that reducing speeds would help conserve significant amounts of motor fuel. This has not proved to be the case." Copulos found that the energy actually saved was minimal – at best 1 percent of gasoline consumption. He also noted that at 55 miles per hour Americans were driving "slower than in almost any other industrial nation." (In 1987, President Reagan allowed speed limits to rise to 65 miles per hour. And in 1995, the power to set speed limits was returned to the states.)

Going back to 55 miles and hour would have negative side effects. C. Edmund Wright, writing for the *American Thinker*, notes, "This reduced speed limit would have the effect of robbing most Americans of hours per year of time and productivity. Increased productivity that has propelled our markets to new highs in the last couple years. It would reduce the productivity of nearly every single truck driver, repair and maintenance crew, sales and marketing rep and in fact every single person and business who depends on transportation for their commerce. In other words, that means practically every single business in the country would take a hit. That inevitably means fewer jobs, reduced economic activity and lower tax revenues."

Costs would rise as transportation delivery time increase. Take groceries as an example. Slower time getting food to market increases spoilage. Additional unintended consequences include a serious impact on travel. Spending more highway hours moving from one point to another is counterproductive for tourism. A trip that would take 12 hours could take 16; robbing American families of additional choices they might make regarding where they travel to spend their time and discretionary income.

Maybe the liberals and the media elites are right. There are two Americas – just not the way they portray it. There are those who seek opportunities for greater independence and those who crave greater dependence -- in other words, the "capitalist" versus the "anti-capitalist." The capitalists believe in limited government and individual initiative. The anti-capitalists want bigger government and group dependency. The agenda of the anti-capitalists slows down America's economic engine. A sure indicator of their gains in this regard will become apparent when you see highway workers once again posting 55 mile an hour signs.

Until next time. . . Brett A. Magbee, Vice President for Operations

Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, Inc., 1401 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73104

Tel: 405-602-1667 / Fax: 405-602-1238 / Website: www.ocpathink.org

OCPA is a research and educational organization promoting public policies consistent with the principles of individual liberty, free enterprise and limited government. Contributions to OCPA are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Nothing written in an OCPA FaxLine Report is to be construed as necessarily reflecting the views of the membership of the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, Inc., or as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any bill before the Oklahoma House or Senate, United States Congress, or any other government body.