Plymouth Institute for Free Enterprise

Expand Access for Oil & Gas Production

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TOPLINE: Federal and state policymakers should expand access to domestic oil and gas by establishing permanent lease-sale schedules and reducing unnecessary restrictions.

BACKGROUND: The federal government controls access to oil and gas across vast areas of federal lands and waters. Onshore federal lands have undiscovered, technically recoverable resources of 29 billion barrels of oil and 392 trillion cubic feet of natural gas; and the Outer Continental Shelf has 66 billion barrels of oil and 218 trillion cubic feet of gas. Access to these resources is critical as petroleum and natural gas together account for 73% of U.S. energy consumption.

Converting this energy potential into production begins with making acreage available for leasing. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act in 2025 required additional oil and gas leases, but its schedules for offshore areas (the Gulf of America and Cook Inlet) and onshore Alaska (Coastal Plain and the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska) are temporary.

Other government actions have hindered efforts to expand oil and gas production. The Biden administration, for example, withdrew the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, the Eastern Gulf of Mexico, and parts of Alaska's North Bering Sea from new oil and gas leasing in January 2025. State policies may separately restrict development. New York, for example, banned hydraulic fracturing, cutting off about 12 million acres of the Marcellus Shale, which is rich in natural gas.

Action Items (Congress and States):

- **Congress should guarantee recurring federal oil and gas lease sales without a sunset** for all federal offshore areas, the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska.
- **Congress should prohibit the administration from making large-scale or indefinite withdrawals of unleased offshore areas**.
- **States should reject hydraulic fracturing bans** like those imposed by New York, California, Maryland, and other states.

How It Would Make Life More Affordable:

- Crude oil makes up about 51% of the retail price of gasoline, so policies that increase domestic production help keep fuel affordable.
- Reducing energy costs helps cut costs and prices throughout the economy.

Related Legislation: Protecting American Energy Production Act (H.R. 26); Offshore Lands Authorities Act of 2025 (H.R. 513).

BOTTOMLINE: America's abundant energy resources are crucial for economic growth and can help shield families and businesses from rising costs, but only if oil and gas producers can access them.