

Offshore drilling bill passes the House

By Grace Jang, CBS 11 News Reporter

A bill on offshore drilling has Congress changing its tune, but Alaska's only voice in the House of Representatives says this is all a sham. Moments before the bill headed to the House floor for debate, **Congressman Don Young** says it's a political gimmick that's also bad for Alaska.

The Comprehensive American Energy Security and Consumer Protection Act promises to open more than 305 million acres to offshore drilling. House Resolution 6899 passed, 236 to 189, and is now headed to the Senate. But President Bush has threatened to veto it.

"Alaskans should know that this is not going to be beneficial to Alaska," **Young** said. "In fact, it could probably be detrimental because the leasing capability of the Chukchi and the Beaufort could be questioned." That's because the bill bans drilling within 50 miles of shore.

"It produces nothing," **Young** said of the bill. "This is a Peter Pan story, a figment of the imagination. It is a political gimmick. It is a sham."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Republicans "must set aside their drill-only mentality and embrace the provisions of this legislation which is balanced, which is comprehensive, which respects the needs of the consumer."

"The choice on the floor today is the status quo, which is what is preferred by big oil, that status quo, big oil status quo or change for the future to take our country in a new direction," Pelosi said.

Young said the bill also leaves out the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR).

"I wasn't going to bring that up but the closest, quickest way to produce a million barrels a day to the United States is to open ANWR," Young said on the floor.

Both sides accuse each other of using the bill to play partisan politics during an election year.

"I don't know why I'm getting worked up about this, because we all know this is a political gimmick," **Young** said. "It's never going to go anywhere. It's not going to become law, but it will give some people cover to say, 'Oh, I voted for more drilling, more production.'"