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Drill, Obama, Drill



ENERGY 03/31 1:04 P.M.

>>> Credit where it's due: Coming late to the party, after all, is better than washing your hair all night. ► ILYA SHAPIRO

- ON THE NEWS: Mixed Reactions from GOP, Democrats on Hill
- YEATMAN: Obama's Drilling Sleight of Hand
- POLLOWITZ: More on the Drilling Plan

THE LEFT 03/31 1:45 P.M.

Wounded Fawns

Why are charges of racism and political extremism suddenly in the air? ► VICTOR DAVIS HANSON

THE LEFT II 03/31 12:00 A.M.

The Politics of Fear

So what if some nutcases happen to have right-wing politics? I thought liberals rejected guilt by association as McCarthyism. ► JONAH GOLDBERG

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THE LEFT III 03/31 12:00 A.M.

Witch Hunter of Capitol Hill

Henry Waxman wields his gavel over the free market like a

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SUZUKI

the corner

Wednesday, March 31, 2010

Drill, Obama, Drill [Ilya Shapiro]

As with closing Guantanamo, using military commissions to try terrorists, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and many other issues, Obama pledged something to fire up his left-wing base and then, having actually learned something about the matter, reversed himself when it came time to implement policy.

Recall that on the campaign trail in June 2008, candidate Obama declared that, "when I'm president, I intend to keep in place the moratorium here in Florida and around the country that prevents oil companies from drilling off Florida's coasts." (See video of that speech here.)

Today, however, President Obama announced plans to lift a 20-year moratorium on oil exploration and development in Atlantic coastal waters running from Virginia to Florida, as well as further activity off Florida's Gulf Coast. (Before any drilling can occur, the Interior Department has to conduct seismic surveys, so keep your rigs in dry dock for the time being.)

While there's plenty to quibble with in the president's announcement — from continued waffling on nuclear energy to the awkward use of a "green" fighter jet as a prop — those who have assailed his pie-in-the-sky energy policy need to give him his due. Coming late to the party, after all, is better than washing your hair all night out of spite.

And so Republicans, conservatives, tea partiers, libertarians, and all others who have (rightly) criticized Obama on health care, cap-and-trade, never-ending "stimulus," auto bailouts, ending D.C. school vouchers, and the rest of his domestic agenda have to acknowledge that for once he's doing something right. Yes, the president should be more open to Pacific and Alaska drilling — though there may be a bit of the latter now — but he's finally made a good decision (however grudgingly).

Moreover, having made our statement of support, we can then sit back and enjoy seeing "progressives" being on the sharp end of Obama's insufferable rhetoric. Because when he says, as he did today, that "we need to move beyond the tired debates between Right and Left" and that "this issue is just too important to allow our progress to languish while we fight the same old battles over and over again," you know somebody's ox is being gored.

To paraphrase John Maynard Keynes — another broken clock that's right about twice a day — the facts have been rammed down Obama's throat and so he had the good sense to change his mind. Well done, Mr. President.

— Ilya Shapiro is a Cato Institute senior fellow.

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