

Republicans Poison Vital Tax Relief and Health Care Bill

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Rothman says off-shore drilling provisions and failure to collect royalties due from oil companies ruin otherwise positive legislation.

On Friday, December 8, 2006, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Tax Relief & Health Care Act. Congressman Steve Rothman's (D-NJ) statement on his vote follows:

"On Friday, the Republican Majority chose to poison an overwhelmingly positive bill—the Tax Relief & Health Care Act—with several terrible provisions. They expanded the amount of offshore drilling by oil companies in the Gulf of Mexico. Worse, Republicans opposed a sensible amendment to make the oil industry pay royalties for drilling in publicly-owned waters in the Gulf of Mexico that they are currently using for free.

"I am opposed to these provisions. However, I could not in good conscience vote against the Tax Relief & Health Care Act, which extends needed tax credits for college students and teachers that expired at the end of 2005. It also prevents a scheduled 5% cut in Medicare payments to doctors that could have forced physicians to turn away Medicare patients. In addition, this bill supports ongoing research and development in the health care industry and other businesses, and invests in renewable energy and energy alternatives. If I voted against this bill, I would have also voted against Medicare patients, teachers, and college students also helped by the legislation.

"Perhaps it is fitting that the Republican Leadership used their last day in power to remind the American people why Democrats are fighting for a new direction. With a new Democratic Majority in Congress, we will clean-up the legislative process to ensure that wrong-headed policies cannot be tacked onto vital legislation in the dead of night. We will also work for energy policies that are important to the American people, without regard to whether the oil companies like the measures."

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