

Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages

English 8

Passport Project

Theme 4

Topic: Whether or not to Open the Gulf of Mexico to Oil Drilling

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Whether or Not to Open the Gulf of Mexico to Oil Drilling

The Gulf of Mexico is a geographic area and a body of water that forms the third coast of the contiguous United States. The Gulf of Mexico is surrounded on the United States side by coastlines of western and northern Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. In Mexico, the Gulf is bordered by the states of Tamaulipas, Veracruz, Tabasco, Campeche, and Yucatán. The area of the Gulf of Mexico is about 615,000 square mi (1.6 million square km). For more than 500 years, the Gulf of Mexico has played a key role in the economic and political development of the United States, Cuba, and Mexico. The Gulf of Mexico is generally characterized by wide continental shelves around most of its periphery. These shelves, where water depths are at most a few hundred feet, have been the sites of intensive oil exploration in the past and to the present.

Basically, there are some positive effects from the oil drilling in the Gulf of Mexico. First, it contributes to economic success. The United States has been able to achieve economic stability thanks to the recovery of the oil and gas markets. For example, offshore drilling greatly improves economic success, in a few ways. By providing domestic sources of oil, it drives down the prices of energy and gas. These prices historically control how well the economy performs.

Second, it can add jobs to the economy. Not only does offshore drilling create jobs, but it creates jobs that are extremely desirable. When a production company enters into a local market, it begins to bolster the entire area. Small businesses are able to grow and expand because those within the community have more spendable income. In turn, this attracts more people to the area, essentially transforming the town into a more attractive place to live in. This additionally improves real estate values, and as offshore drilling jobs extend over the country, improves the economy as a whole.

Last, it is providing a superior energy resource. Oil is one of the best available resources of energy. In many areas of the world, the choices are between coal and oil. Coal is a “dirty” type of energy that pollutes regardless of how it is used, whereas oil is far more beneficial to the environment by comparison. Other sources of energy, such as wind energy, are simply not going to be useful in most places because they are prohibitively expensive. Thus, offshore drilling contributes to the overall improvement of the environment. Offshore drilling is contributing substantially to America’s energy independence, and in doing so, it’s also improving the lives of those who work for offshore drilling companies and for those who simply live in proximity to oil and gas companies. Now it is the best time for those interested in the energy market to get into the oil and gas industry and to grow and thrive.

On the other hand, oil drilling at the Gulf of Mexico has a lot of negative impacts on people's health, animals, and environment. Oil and gas production are among the main causes of air pollution and one of the biggest killers according to the United Nations. When fossil fuels are burned by power plants, automobiles and industrial facilities, they generate toxic gases. Breathing this air can trigger respiratory problems in humans such as asthma, cardiovascular diseases, developmental issues, and even cancer.

The drilling method of “fracking” is done by injecting a mixture of water and chemicals into rock formations to release oil and gas. Then, it generates huge volumes of wastewater with dangerous chemicals that leak to pond, lagoons and underground aquifers. As a result, it can contaminate drinking water sources with chemicals that lead to cancer, birth defects, and liver damage.

Fossil fuel extraction turns visitors away. Hunters, anglers, hikers, birders and vacationing families go into the wilderness to experience nature in all its beauty. Oil tanks, power poles, noisy compressors and busy roads are not what they expect to see. Too much noise near a good fishing hole, a population of wildlife or a formerly peaceful landscape can ruin anyone’s nature getaway.

Oil drilling can disrupt wildlife habitats and can be deadly to animals. Loud noises, human movement and vehicle traffic from drilling operations can disrupt bird species’ communication, breeding and nesting. The explosion of BP’s Deepwater Horizon rig in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 resulting in a spill covered 68,000 square miles of sea surface. There were 11 workers killed and gushed millions of barrels of toxic crude oil into some of the richest marine habitats in the world. This ongoing disaster threw tens of thousands of

fishermen, oystermen, shrimpers, and others out of work. It made food unsafe to eat and air unsafe to breathe and resulted in widespread health problems for the people of the Gulf, where oil spread out across more than 1,000 miles of coastal lands and marshes. It is still taking a toll on marine life.

Scientists have found that the bright glow hurts pollinators such as bees. These insects have a very important job of moving pollens around to generate new fruits and plants. But luminosity disrupts their life cycles. The brightness is also changing into uniquely beautiful landscapes like the Chaco National Park due to the glare coming from nearby oil and gas complexes. Polar bears could be hurt by drilling in the Arctic. The animals are already at risk due to climate change melting their icy habitats, and further pollution could poison their prey.

In fact, most dirty emissions originate from fossil fuels. The most abundant type of greenhouse gas is carbon dioxide, primarily released into the air through the burning of oil, coal and gas that fuel everything from cars to manufacturing. Another gas, methane, is released during the extraction of natural gas through the method of “fracking.” The construction of roads, facilities and drilling sites known as well pads requires the use of heavy equipment and can destroy big chunks of pristine wilderness by stripping the environment of vegetation, increasing erosion, disturbing the land’s ground surface, and fragmenting unspoiled wildlife habitats.

In conclusion, we highly recommend that we shouldn't open the Gulf of Mexico to oil drilling considering some of the negative impacts on people's health, animals, and environment. Although the oil drilling contributes an economic success to the United States and provides lots of jobs for the citizens, we should consider its long impact with care.

References

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