

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-588

AN ACT PROHIBITING OFF-SHORE DRILLING FOR OIL AND GAS IN

Title: CONNECTICUT.

Vote Date: 3/25/2019

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/18/2019

File No.: 659

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

Environment Committee

Sen. Mary Daugherty Abrams, 13th Dist.
Sen. Christine Cohen, 12th Dist.
Sen. Mae Flexer, 29th Dist.
Sen. Julie Kushner, 24th Dist.
Sen. Martin M. Looney, 11th Dist.
Sen. Douglas McCrory, 2nd Dist.
Sen. Norm Needleman, 33rd Dist.

Sen. Steve Cassano, 4th Dist.
Sen. Bob Duff, 25th Dist.
Sen. Will Haskell, 26th Dist.
Sen. Matthew L. Lesser, 9th Dist.
Sen. James J. Maroney, 14th Dist.
Sen. Marilyn V. Moore, 22nd Dist.
Sen. Catherine A. Osten, 19th Dist.

Rep. Patricia A. Dillon, 92nd Dist.
Rep. Mary M. Mushinsky, 85th Dist.
Rep. Kate Rotella, 43rd Dist.

Rep. David Michel, 146th Dist.
Rep. Kevin Ryan, 139th Dist.
Rep. Michael A. Winkler, 56th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

In 2015 and 2016 United States halted exploration for fossil fuels from approximately 120 million acres of the Arctic Ocean and approximately 3.8 million acres in the Atlantic Ocean in certain areas from Virginia to the Canadian border. However, a 2017 Executive Order directed the Secretary of the Interior to repeal the drilling ban. The bill seeks to prohibit off-shore drilling for oil and gas in Connecticut.

Substitute Language – LCO No. 6553

Testimony submitted by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) requested clarification that seismic surveying should refer specifically to the exploration fossil fuels. Concern was expressed that without such language, the bill could be

read to apply to ongoing seafloor mapping projects conducted by DEEP. Substitute language includes “for the purpose of facilitating the exploration for or drilling of oil or gas” in lines 20 through 21.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie S. Dykes, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP): Supports the bill. While supportive of the concept of the bill, DEEP expressed concerns in regards to the following: (1) the term “territorial waters of the state” is undefined, but may derive from the admiralty law concept of “territorial sea,” the bill should be amended to use the term “waters of the state” and (2) the term “seismic mapping” as defined in the bill may apply to present and future mapping of the seafloor by DEEP, it’s academic partners, or Federal entities using acoustic methods. These methods are not detrimental to sea life in Long Island Sound. The bill should be amended to use language directly associated with fossil fuel exploration and production.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Lori Brown, Executive Director, Connecticut League of Conservation Voters (CTLCV): Offshore exploration and drilling for fossil fuels present dangers to marine life, ecology and industries around Long Island Sound. Oil spills pose a significant risk in any drilling operation. Such spills will contaminate waters and kill marine life. Additionally, seismic surveying for fossil fuels involves firing blasts of compressed air to locate fossil fuel deposits. These blasts deafen and disrupt marine life, and may possibly have detrimental effects on local marine industries.

Louis Burch, Connecticut Program Director, Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE): CCE encourages Connecticut’s legislators to protect the coast from oil and gas exploration and production. Offshore drilling disasters have caused significant damage; the most recent Deep Water Horizon spill killed more than 80,000 birds from more than 100 different species. Connecticut is experiencing climate changes locally, and has committed to renewable energy and reduction of greenhouse gases. Fossil fuel exploration and production is unnecessary and contradicts investments Connecticut has made to protect the environment.

Representative Christine Palm, 36th Assembly Dist.: The Trump Administration reversed the Obama Administration’s ban of seismic surveying on the Atlantic Coast for fossil fuels. This ban was enacted due to the method’s irreparable damage to marine life. While some may contend there the bill is unnecessary because are no fossil fuel reserves off Connecticut coastlines, the point of seismic surveying is to test and locate fossil fuel reserves.

Samantha Dynowski, State Director, Sierra Club Connecticut: A sustainable program which includes renewable energy and conservation is the best path to protect the state’s environment and grow the economy. Fossil fuel leads to climate change; offshore fossil fuel exploration and production is not the answer. There are significant environmental impacts as a result of offshore exploration and production. A 2017 study by the National Resource Defense Council stated seismic surveying has been implicated in whale beaching and

stranding incidents. A 2003 study by the National Academy of Sciences showed that toxic chemicals, such as benzene, arsenic, zinc and other radioactive materials, used in offshore drilling are released in the surrounding water and mud – this discharge of toxic chemicals is legally permissible. Additionally, 880,000 gallons of oil is spilled annually as a result of production.

The Environment Committee received approximately 35 written testimonies supporting the bill explaining that (1) oil spills are detrimental to the environment and marine wildlife, and (2) seismic surveying has been known to kill and impair marine wildlife.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed.

Reported by: Steve Smith / Ussawin R. Bumpen Date: 04/16/2019