



GOP's Energy Plan Is Really an "Oil Above All" Plan

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Oil companies and the GOP in Congress want to continue bilking American taxpayers both at the pump and at the Treasury. House Republicans claim they favor an "all of the above" energy strategy to lower gas prices. But in the three months since they assumed their new majority, the GOP has taken nine votes that would either benefit Big Oil or slash funding for policies that reduce our dependence on foreign oil—all while hurting consumers (see page 5 for more information on these votes).

The GOP in Congress has voted to gut efficiency programs, research and development for energy innovation, and funding for the Commodity Futures Trading Commission to crack down on oil speculators who artificially drive up the price of gas. The House-passed fiscal year 2011 continuing resolution, H.R. 1, would eliminate funding for energy innovation research and development. It would also cut \$2.5 billion in funding for high-speed rail that would reduce oil use—all while maintaining billions of dollars in subsidies and royalty-free drilling for Big Oil. Additionally, GOP members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee voted to block the Environmental Protection Agency, or EPA, from reducing carbon dioxide pollution from vehicles, which would improve fuel economy, reduce oil use, and save consumers money.

Supporting only Big Oil investments is not an "all of the above" strategy. It's an "oil above all" policy.

Below we take a look at what the answer would be to a multiple choice question on the GOP's energy strategy on a pop quiz. A study guide on the answers can be found below the graphic.

Who benefits from the GOP's energy plan?



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Pop quiz on the GOP's energy strategy

1. Republicans' "all of the above" energy plan to reduce gas prices and our dependence on foreign oil includes which of the following?

a. Handouts to Big Oil

[House Vote #109, February 18, 2011; #153, March 1, 2011]

~~b. Research and development for energy innovation~~

[House Vote #147, February 19, 2011]

~~c. High-speed rail investments~~

[House Appropriations Committee Cuts, 2011; House Vote #147, February 19, 2011]

~~d. Cleaner biofuels~~

[House Vote #134, February 19, 2011]

~~e. More efficient cars~~

[Detroit News, March 16, 2011]

~~f. Requiring oil companies to produce oil from existing leases~~

[The Hill, March 24, 2011]

~~g. Cracking down on oil price speculators~~

[Republican Appropriations Committee Cuts, 2011; House Vote #147, February 19, 2011]

~~h. All of the above~~

Pop quiz answer guide

a) Handouts to Big Oil

Republicans voted to keep taxpayer-funded subsidies for oil companies. Republicans unanimously voted against a motion to recommit the short-term continuing resolution, or CR, with instructions to repeal billions of dollars in subsidies to any "major integrated oil company." [House Vote #153, March 1, 2011]

Republicans rejected an amendment to the House CR that would have saved American

taxpayers \$53 billion over the next 25 years. The House rejected an amendment to the CR (H.R. 1) by Rep. Ed Markey (D-MA) that would have “corrected a 1995 mistake in drilling rules that allowed oil and gas companies to drill in portions of the Gulf of Mexico without paying royalties.” The amendment would have saved taxpayers \$1.5 billion in 2011 and \$53 billion over the next 25 years. It was rejected by a 251-174 vote. [House Vote #109, [February 18, 2011](#); *The Times Picayune*, [February 19, 2011](#)]

Rep. Joe Barton (R-TX) defended subsidies for oil companies. Rep. Barton is perhaps the oil-and-gas industry’s staunchest supporter on Capitol Hill. Earlier this month he said, “Over time if you put so many disincentives against any U.S. manufacturing or production company, or oil and gas exploration company, they’ll go out of business.” He also argued that the subsidies for the industry should remain unchanged “so long as you believe that you believe in the free market capitalist system and they should be headquartered in the United States.” [Talking Points Memo, [March 10, 2011](#)]

b) Research and development for energy innovation

The House CR would zero out funding for innovative energy research and development. H.R. 1 would zero out funding for the [Advanced Research Projects Agency—Energy, or ARPA-E](#). The agency is “modeled after the successful Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the agency responsible for technological innovations such as the Internet ... ARPA-E’s mission is to fund projects that will develop transformational technologies that reduce America’s dependence on foreign energy imports; reduce U.S. energy related emissions; improve energy efficiency ... ensure that the U.S. maintains its leadership in developing and deploying advanced energy technologies.” President George W. Bush signed ARPA-E into law. [House Vote #147, [February 19, 2011](#); [Department of Energy](#); [Center for American Progress, March 15, 2011](#)]

c) High-speed rail investments

The House CR would zero out funding for high-speed rail, cut Amtrak’s budget, and slash funding for transit. The Center for American Progress reported in February 2011 that “the proposed House spending bill would cut existing rail by slicing one-tenth of Amtrak’s budget. It would also zero out funds for high-speed rail.” Studies show that high-speed rail reduces oil dependence. [Ohio PIRG, [November 10, 2010](#); House Appropriations Committee Cuts, [2011](#); Center for American Progress, [February 14, 2011](#)]

d) Cleaner biofuels

Republicans voted to block the EPA from implementing the E15 waiver. *The Hill*

reported in February that “Lawmakers voted 285-136 for Rep. John Sullivan’s (R-OK) amendment that would block EPA from using funding this fiscal year to implement its so-called E15 waiver, which allows ethanol levels in gasoline of up to 15 percent in cars from model year 2001 onward.” [*The Hill*, February 19, 2011; House Vote #134, February 19, 2011 (31 Republicans voted against it)]

e) More efficient cars

Republicans on the House Energy and Commerce Committee voted to strip the EPA of its power to limit tailpipe emissions. *Detroit News* reported earlier this month that “The House Energy and Commerce Committee Tuesday approved a bill that would strip from the Environmental Protection Agency and the state of California the power to limit tailpipe emissions and other greenhouse gases.” According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, “The legislation also would undermine efforts that would save American drivers thousands of dollars at the pump over the life of their vehicles through stronger fuel efficiency standards.” [Union of Concerned Scientists, March 10, 2011; *Detroit News*, March 16, 2011]

Senate Republicans voted against extending Cash for Clunkers in 2009. CNN reported that President Obama signed an extension of Cash for Clunkers into law in August 2009. According to CNN, “Under the Clunkers program as enacted, vehicles purchased after July 1 are eligible for refund vouchers worth \$3,500 to \$4,500 on traded-in gas guzzlers. The trade-in vehicle has to get a combined city and highway fuel economy rating of 18 miles per gallon or less.” [CNN, August 7, 2009; Senate Vote #270, August 6, 2009 (four Republicans voted for the measure)]

f) Require oil companies to produce oil from existing leases

Democrats introduced a bill to require oil companies to “use it or lose it.” Reps. Ed Markey (D-MA) and Rush Holt (D-NJ) introduced a bill “that would compel oil and gas companies to produce on the drilling leases they already own, instead of continuing the practice by the oil and gas industry to ‘squat’ on their leased lands without producing” oil. *The Hill* reported in March 2011 that “Interior Secretary Ken Salazar said there are 41.2 million acres of onshore public land leased for oil-and-gas production, but only 12.2 million acres that are ‘strongly producing.’” [House Natural Resources Committee Democrats, March 3, 2011; *The Hill*, March 24, 2011]

Republicans echoed oil industry talking points in opposing “use it or lose it” bills. *The Hill* reported in March 2011 that “Republicans and the oil industry ramped up their campaign Thursday to undercut Democratic proposals that pressure oil companies to tap their unused leases.” The paper went on to note that “[R]epublicans sought to

discredit ‘use it or lose it’ proposals.” “We won’t reduce our dependence on foreign oil if politicians in Washington remain dependent on hollow talking points like ‘use it or lose it,’” House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) [said in a statement](#). The American Petroleum Institute had similar sentiments. Republicans in the House Natural Resources Committee also attacked the proposal. [*The Hill*, [March 24, 2011](#); House Natural Resources Committee Release, [March 24, 2011](#)]

g) Cracking down on oil speculators

Republicans voted to let oil speculators go wild by cutting funding for the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. The House CR takes off the beat one-third of the cops at the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, or CFTC, who police oil trades to protect American families from price manipulation, which helped drive up gas prices a few years ago. The House-passed CR cuts the CFTC budget from \$169 million to \$110 million, a one-third cut. Evidence already indicates that speculators are driving up oil prices again in 2011. Reuters reports that “Hedge funds’ bullish oil bets rose to an all-time high for a third straight week as concerns about supplies increased amid fighting in Libya and the threats of protests in Saudi Arabia.” New data released by CFTC Commissioner Bart Chilton shows that speculators increased their number of energy futures contracts by 64 percent since June 2008, accounting for a total 1 million contracts as of January 2011. It is the highest level on record. [Republican Appropriations Committee, [FY2011 Cuts](#), accessed March 9, 2011; House Vote #147, [February 19, 2011](#); [Reuters, March 14, 2011](#); [Business Week, March 15, 2011](#)]

More on the GOP’s nine votes on energy

In the three months since the GOP assumed their new majority, they have taken nine votes that would either benefit Big Oil or slash funding for policies to reduce our dependence on foreign oil—all while hurting consumers. Details on the votes are below.

1. House GOP voted for H.R. 1, which would gut funding for renewables, high-speed rail, and public transit. [House Vote #147, [February 19, 2011](#)]
2. All but 13 members of the House GOP voted against restoring ARPA-E funding to invest in R&D for advanced batteries and other 21st century technologies. [House Vote #56 (failed 159-273; R: 13-227), [February 16, 2011](#)]
3. Most GOP members of the House voted to cut the EPA science and technology budget by \$64.1 million. [House Vote #63 (failed 199-230; R: 190-48), [February 16, 2011](#)]

4. House GOP unanimously voted against repealing \$40 billion in subsidies to the oil companies over 10 years. [House Vote #153, [March 1, 2011](#)]
5. Most GOP members of the House voted against recovering \$53 billion over 25 years in foregone royalty fees from oil-and-gas companies. [House Vote #109, [February 18, 2011](#); *The Times-Picayune*, [February 19, 2011](#)]
6. All but four members of the House GOP voted to restrict the EPA's ability to protect public health from carbon dioxide pollution. [House Vote #96, [February 18, 2011](#)]
7. The majority of the House GOP voted against cleaner biofuels. [House Vote #134, [February 19, 2011](#)]
8. Most GOP members of the House voted to block funding for construction of home-grown ethanol facilities. [Roll Call #125 (261-158; R: 183-53), [February 19, 2011](#)]
9. In a failed amendment, most of the House GOP voted to cut funding to Amtrak. [House Vote #79, [February 17, 2011](#); *Greenwire*, [February 17, 2011](#)]