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## **CRAIG SAYS SENATE MUST DEBATE GAS PRICES, 'AMERICANS' GREATEST SINGLE PROBLEM'**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Idaho Senator Larry Craig today appealed to the Senate’s Democratic leadership to permit a full and open debate and amendment process on energy legislation. The leadership has brought to the full Senate a narrow bill on oil speculation., but is insisting on limiting the scope of any Republican amendments and the number of amendments to two or even just one.

“For the last 36 hours, we in the Senate have been attempting to move forward on substantive policy that would produce more oil to offset and lower the price that our consumers are paying at the pump,” Craig said. “But nothing has happened. We’ve been here 36 hours doing nothing but talking when amendments could have been offered to take down the federal moratorium that exists over many of these properties where we know there are known oil reserves.”

Craig, a senior member of the Senate’s Energy and Natural Resources Committee, in a statement on the Senate floor today, called on the Senate to lift the ban on offshore oil and gas exploration. “We believe that within the territorial waters off the U.S. coasts, there literally are billions of barrels of oil. What we know is that where we were allowed to drill, down in the Gulf of Mexico, that’s where a majority of our current oil supplies are coming from, even in the deep water. But off the coasts of California, Oregon, Washington, Virginia, the Carolinas and Florida, it’s no. Heck, no. The politics won’t let us go there. We would like to offer a few amendments and change the character of that ‘no zone.’”

If the Senate Democratic leadership opens up the bill for debate, Craig said he intends to offer an amendment to open up the Eastern Gulf of Mexico to within 50 miles off Florida’s coast, remove the existing moratoria on exploration, and allow the Interior Department to offer leases in that area for oil and natural gas exploration.

“The oil is there, but the law says we can’t go there,” Craig said. “It is really quite that simple. We are lawmakers. We are policymakers. Why aren’t we on the floor debating those amendments? Why aren’t we offering those amendments in a responsible fashion? Why don’t we deal with what the American public needs at this moment, and that’s to see their Congress responsive to their single greatest problem at this time – the price of oil and gas at the pump?”