



## Runyan holds states' rights stance on offshore drilling

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Just nine Republicans in all of the House voted against the measure, while 22 Democrats joined Republicans in passing the bill. The bill would also have expedited drilling off Virginia.

But Runyan voted against the bill because it did not include a provision allowing state referendums on drilling. His support for the energy industry is strong, an aide said Monday.

Indeed, a quieter vote speeding the path toward drilling saw Runyan voting with his party: just two Republicans, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida and Walter Jones of North Carolina, joined Democrats in opposing that bill, which is expected to fail in the Senate.

Steven Stern, a Burlington County Democrat, said he was disappointed in Runyan.

"My position is oil from a spill doesn't know state lines," Stern said. "If Virginia has an oil spill, it will affect the beaches of New Jersey."

If the Recreational Fishing Alliance PAC is concerned about Republicans' friendliness to offshore drilling, it's not showing. The powerful lobby donated to Adler; it has given \$2,000 to Runyan.

Using the 10th Amendment – or the argument of states' rights – to avoid taking a clear position on a regulatory matter is nothing new, observers said, but it can be a distraction from what's really afoot.

"This is not a federalism issue, this is an overregulation issue," said Mario Loyola, a fellow with the Center for 10th Amendment Studies at the Texas Public Policy foundation, a conservative think tank.

"The problem with these regulations are not that they violate states' rights, it's that they're so onerous. There is a coalition of people in power in Washington who don't want to let red states use their resources."

On the flip side of the argument is Athan Manuel, director of lands protection at the Sierra Club in Washington. It wasn't long ago opposition to energy exploration was regional, he said, meaning Republicans and Democrats around the Chesapeake Bay, for instance, were united on those issues.

"There is an erosion (in environmental protections) in the wake of the Tea Party and some of the more conservative ideologies," Manuel said. "This used to be a straight regional issue, but ever since 2008

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and \$4-a-gallon gas, we've seen an erosion of Republican opposition to drilling."

The two dominant currents off the Eastern Seaboard are the Gulf Stream, which originates in the Gulf of Mexico, and the Labrador Current from Canada, Manuel said. While the Gulf Stream moves northeast out to the British Isles, the Labrador "loops back" toward New Jersey and Long Island.

"New Jersey members of Congress should be very interested in what happens off the coast of Virginia," he said.

An industry report predicted faster permits for energy projects could create 230,000 jobs in 2012 and add \$44 billion to the economy.

"The moratorium the Obama administration imposed was an almost criminal travesty," Loyola said.

"Why would you add more regulations to it?" Runyan asked Monday before repeating, "There is a need for energy here."

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