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MEDIA RELEASE

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Florida senator attacks climate bill's oil-drilling provisions

WASHINGTON, D.C. - One of Congress' most ardent opponents of expanding offshore drilling, who's also a supporter of climate change legislation, today said he could not support the newly unveiled climate bill, if it contains provisions that allow oil and gas drillers to operate off Florida's Atlantic coast, especially in a missile testing range.

"The bill could allow drilling in federal waters close to states' coastlines, including along the Atlantic seaboard," U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson wrote in letters today to President Obama and the climate bill's two chief sponsors, U.S. Sens. John Kerry and Joe Lieberman. "It would be up to states, like Florida, whether to establish a 75-mile no-drill zone. As a result, the bill could cede to the Florida Legislature decisions about commercial and other activities where we have a unique U.S. military installation and national missile testing range.

"We must not consider drilling in a missile testing range," Nelson wrote. "We must not give the Florida Legislature a veto over military and intelligence activities in the testing range and Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. Such is unthinkable."

In 1947 Cape Canaveral was selected as a U.S. missile testing range. Since then, it's been used by the Department of Defense and National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Other military facilities at nearby Port Canaveral support U.S. Navy ballistic missile ship and submarine operations.

Nelson helped write a law in 2006 that keeps oil and gas drilling between 125 miles and 235 miles off his state's Gulf of Mexico coast. It appears the Kerry-Lieberman bill leaves those protections intact, but the administration more recently proposed to allow new exploration and drilling along the Atlantic seaboard.

The Kerry-Lieberman bill would allow new drilling in federal waters off coastal states unless a state enacted a 75 mile no-drill zone. Federal waters generally start at three miles off the coast.

With Democrats anticipating the need for getting 60 votes in order to take up the climate bill, support from the Florida Democratic senator would be crucial. Also, a number of

lawmakers are expected to be more hesitant about any expansion of offshore drilling given the catastrophic spill in the Gulf from the April 20 Deepwater Horizon explosion.

Following is the text of Nelson's letter to Obama:

May 13, 2010

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I have reviewed the American Power Act climate bill which reflects your administration's position on oil exploration. I regretfully must oppose this bill - if it includes the following:

The bill could allow drilling in federal waters close to states' coastlines, including along the Atlantic seaboard. It would be up to states, like Florida, whether to establish a 75-mile no-drill zone. As a result, the bill could cede to the Florida Legislature decisions about commercial and other activities where we have a unique U.S. military installation and national missile testing range.

Such is unthinkable. For one thing, we must not consider drilling in a missile testing range. For another, we must not give the Florida Legislature a veto over military and intelligence activities in the testing range and Cape Canaveral Air Force Station.

This site was selected as a U.S. missile testing range after World War II. Over the past six decades, it's been used by the Department of Defense and National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Other military facilities at nearby Port Canaveral support U.S. Navy ballistic missile ship and submarine operations.

I would be happy to discuss this issue with you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely

Bill Nelson