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Waxman: Coastal Protection Needs to be National Priority

Santa Monica Patch

By Jessica E. Davis

Rep. Henry Waxman called for renewed protections on California's coastline in the wake of a new report detailing what he is calling a "Republican assault" on coastal water, marine life and the environment.

"Protecting our coastal areas should be a national priority," Waxman said at a news conference at Pepperdine University in Malibu. "Yet the House Republican assault on coastal water, marine life, and the environment has been relentless."

Waxman highlighted the report along with representatives from the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Waterkeeper, Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission and Surfrider Foundation. Malibu Mayor Laura Zahn Rosenthal, Mayor Pro Tem Lou La Monte and Councilman John Sibert also attended.

"Coastal protections were established because the American people want clean beaches, clean water, and development that protect our seashores. Twelve million jobs in California depend on our coast. Congress should be strengthening coastal protections, not turning the clock back," Waxman said.

The report claims that the 112th Congress has become the most anti-environment House in the history of the United States.

"The laws on the books were adopted by bipartisan support signed by Republicans," Waxman said, adding that many federal laws protecting coastal areas are now under attack. "I think it's essential that we hold elected officials accountable," he said.

The report was prepared by Democratic members of the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

According to the report, the House has voted 297 times to undermine basic environmental protections that have existed for decades and allow more pollution into the nation's air, land, and water since January 2011.

Of the 297 votes on the environment, 117 were for policies that would impact coastal areas, including in California.

According to a press release from Waxman's office, the report found:

- The House has voted repeatedly to force new oil and gas drilling along the California coast – as well as in other coastal areas where drilling is not now currently permitted.
- The House has voted 26 times to allow offshore drilling operations to meet weaker environmental and safety standards, including votes to limit environmental review of new offshore drilling projects; to block minimum standards for blowout preventers and oil spill response; and to weaken Clean Air Act protections for offshore drilling activities.
- The House has voted 24 times to block action to address climate change – even though climate change could spell disaster for our coasts through significant sea level rise and ocean acidification.
- The House has voted 20 times to undermine Clean Water Act programs and protections for coastal areas and nearby waterways.
- The House has voted 16 times to weaken protections for fish and marine species, including votes to remove protections for salmon, sea turtles, sea otters, sea lions, and other species.
- The House has voted repeatedly to cut funding for coastal protection. It voted to cut funding for the National Ocean Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service, as well as to block implementation of the National Ocean Policy, which President Obama established to improve the country's stewardship of the oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes.

Waxman said he has fought hard to protect California's coast.

"Most of them have not become law, but they are supported by many economic interests especially oil companies. They are not going to give up," Waxman said.