

WASHINGTON— U.S. Representative Harry Mitchell voted today for legislation to require oil and gas companies to utilize existing leases to drill for oil on federal lands

The Responsible Federal Oil and Gas Act, H.R. 6251, would require oil companies that have exploration leases to “diligently develop” or abandon their leases before they can receive new leases from the Department of Interior.

Despite bipartisan support, this “Use it or Lose it” legislation failed to pass with the necessary two-thirds support, under suspension of the rules. The final vote was 223 to 195.

Mitchell said he was troubled that Congress came up short in its attempt to require oil companies to make use of thousands of dormant oil and gas leases, encompassing 68 million acres of public land, before they can be granted access to new federal lands for oil exploration.

“After eight years of a failed energy policy we must set aside our differences and work together,” said Mitchell. “They don’t ask you if you’re a Republican or a Democrat at the pump. We’re all paying the same price.”

The 68 million acres of leased inactive public land – a total area almost as large as the state of Arizona -- could nearly double U.S. oil production and could cut oil imports by one-third, producing an additional 4.89 million barrels of oil a day.

Mitchell Votes to Encourage Oil Companies to Use Existing Drilling Leases

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The average price in Arizona is above \$4.00 a gallon compared to a year ago where gas was under \$3.00 a gallon for unleaded fuel[Source: [AAA](#)]