

# West Coast Dems float measure to block new Pacific wells

**Katie Howell, Environment & Energy Publishing , 1-26-11**

A group of West Coast Democratic senators yesterday floated legislation that would permanently ban offshore drilling along Pacific coastlines.

The legislation, originally introduced last year in the wake of the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, would reinstate a lapsed ban on West Coast oil and gas development.

"One of the lessons learned from the disastrous BP oil spill is that without a fundamental transformation of the oil industry, another spill is possible, even likely. That's not a risk I'm willing to take for Washington state's beautiful coastlines and the communities that depend on them," Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), one of the lead authors of the legislation, said in a statement.

Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) is the measure's other primary author. Sens. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), Patty Murray (D-Wash.), and Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) also are co-sponsors.

No official Pacific drilling bans currently exist, after federal moratoriums on offshore oil and gas drilling expired in 2008. While President Obama has vowed not to allow any new drilling in the region, the West Coast senators want a permanent protection.

An oil spill in the Pacific Ocean would devastate the region's commercial and recreational fishing industries, the lawmakers said.

"More offshore drilling will not lower gasoline prices or reduce our nation's dangerous overreliance on foreign oil, which is why we should be focusing on the promising clean energy alternatives that are better for consumers and can provide long-term sustainable solutions to America's energy needs," Cantwell said.