

## CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Coastal Commission Chair Applauds Action to Protect Coastal Resources****San Francisco, CA April 2, 2003**

Today California Coastal Commission Chair Mike Reilly applauded the leadership of Congressman George Miller to fight back attempts to weaken the nation's premier coastal protection law – known as the Coastal Zone Management Act. Congressman Miller is a member of the House Resources Committee that considered the most recent version of the National Energy Bill. Under consideration today was a provision that would have substantially reduced the ability of coastal states to protect their shores from the adverse impacts of offshore oil and gas development and other major industrial activities.

“Congressman Miller was instrumental in obtaining bi-partisan support for a key federal law providing California and all coastal states the ability to protect the coast from development in federal waters,” said Reilly. Congressman Miller proposed amendments that will help preserve the rights of states to provide this protection. “This is a victory for states rights and coastal protection,” said Reilly. “Absent this amendment, the future of our coastline would no longer be in the hands of coastal states, but would be governed almost exclusively by federal government officials in Washington, D.C. States need to protect their coastal interests.”

This action follows the recent decision by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upholding the ability of the State of California to review the re-issuance of federal offshore oil and gas leases for consistency with their coastal management plan. On Monday, Interior Secretary Gale Norton announced that the federal government would not appeal this court decision that affirms that California has both the right and the duty to review the impacts of these actions.

The bill provisions would have devastated the ability of coastal states to fully review activities such as oil and gas production in federal waters that could be harmful to resources along the coast. The bill would have eliminated meaningful state participation in appeals to the Secretary of Commerce by imposing unreasonable and unworkable time limitations for the processing of the appeal, and by limiting the information the Secretary must take into account in acting on appeals. Also, the bill would have had the effect of overriding states' rights by providing for automatic approval of an OCS oil drilling or other federal activity to which the state objected if the Secretary fails to act on the appeal within the time limits that would have been established by the amendment.

The amendment to the bill offered by Congressman Miller provides a time frame for the Secretary of Commerce to compile the record and take action with extensions granted if agreed to by all parties and if necessary to complete environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act.

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