

For Immediate Release:
September 21, 2006

*****CONFERENCE CALL*****

House Democrats To Call For Immediate Congressional Hearings & Investigations Into Reported Efforts By Senior Interior Dept. Officials To Allow Oil & Gas Companies To Cheat American Taxpayers Out Of Royalty Payments

Hinchey, Markey, Miller, Maloney, & Others To Hold Conference Call

TODAY, Thursday, September 21, 2006

3:30pm

CALL: 800-857-1065

ACCESS CODE: 39577

Washington, DC -- A group of House Democrats will hold a **conference call TODAY, Thursday, September 21, 2006 at 3:30pm to announce their call for immediate congressional hearings and investigations into reported efforts by senior Interior Department officials to allow oil and gas companies to cheat American taxpayers out of royalty payments.** Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), Congressman Ed Markey (D-MA), Congressman George Miller (D-CA), Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), and other House Democrats will discuss three letters they are sending today to the House leadership, House Resources Committee Chairman Richard Pombo (R-CA), and House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior Chairman Charles Taylor (R-NC), asking that oversight hearings be held on the matter before Congress adjourns for October. **To access the conference call, please dial 800-857-1065 and enter access code 39577.**

According to an article in today's *New York Times*, four Interior Department auditors have filed a lawsuit against the agency after senior agency officials suppressed their efforts to collect more than \$30 million in fraudulent royalty underpayments by oil and gas companies that are operating on public property in the Gulf of Mexico.

This recent revelation comes one week after Interior Department Inspector General Earl Devaney testified before Congress that, "Simply stated, short of a crime, anything goes at the highest levels of the Department of the Interior."

The House Democrats holding the conference call are the coauthors and cosponsors of an amendment that was approved in the House earlier this year that would help close a loophole that has allowed energy companies to profit on oil and gas taken from U.S.

coastal waters in the Gulf of Mexico without paying a royalty, or user fee, to the federal government.

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