**Energy Caucus Article for CoreMessage Public Affairs Agency:**

As political tensions rise in the Middle East, gas prices continue to soar in Florida and throughout the United States. In already tough financial times, people are being forced to confront our nation’s energy crisis head on. The statewide average cost for regular gasoline has surpassed $3.50 cents a gallon, and USA Today predicts that prices could potentially reach $5 a gallon by summer.

The Middle East’s current instability has adversely affected our ability to provide consistently affordable energy, and according to several analysts, will continue to do so for quite some time. With the demand for reliable energy increasing, it is vital that our lawmakers consider all of our domestic energy resources- including offshore exploration.

U.S. Senator Jon Kyl (R-AZ) recently pointed out that one the reasons for gas prices’ doubling is due to the Obama administration’s lack of issuing drilling permits. Without these drilling permits America remains dependent on foreign oil as a primary source of energy at a time when the world’s current state makes it an unpredictable and undesirable option.

The demand for offshore oil exploration has become more apparent than ever as oil prices continue to fluctuate and our need for energy continues to grow. Now is the time to improve the status of the United States by seizing the opportunities offshore drilling presents in order to benefit and strengthen our nation as a whole.