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## Oil Hypocrisy

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**Energy Policy:** As the White House goes to court to defend its self-imposed drilling moratorium, it floats the idea of tapping our strategic petroleum reserve to lower rising prices. How about the oil offshore and in Alaska?

Listening to mainstream punditry, you'd think \$4 gas is due solely to Mideast unrest and global demand. Those are factors, but so are our self-imposed restrictions on supply.

The administration at least acknowledges that the law of supply and demand exists, with White House Chief of Staff Bill Daley telling NBC's "Meet the Press" Sunday that the White House is considering tapping into the nation's strategic petroleum reserve to counteract upward price pressure caused by fear of supply disruptions from Mideast unrest.

"The issue of the reserves is one (option) we are considering," Daley said. All matters have to be on the table." All options? Does that include opening up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, ending a de facto drilling moratorium in the Gulf of Mexico and lifting a seven-year ban on drilling off our coasts?

We think not, for as Daley was uttering those words the administration was speaking out of the other side of its mouth by going to court to appeal a judge's order to act on several Gulf of Mexico deep-water drilling permits. That appeal was made Friday, the same day the national average for a price of self-serve unleaded hit \$3.51, up 32.7 cents from two weeks earlier.

The Obama administration appealed an order by District Court Judge Martin Feldman, who on Feb. 17 gave the administration and Interior Department 30 days to decide on five pending deep-water drilling permit applications. He later added two more permits to his order.

It was Feldman who issued an injunction against the administration's total ban on deep-water drilling after the Deepwater Horizon disaster, calling it "heavy-handed, and rather overbearing." The administration had even doctored a report by experts it convened on offshore drilling safety to make it seem as if they approved of the moratorium, which they later said they did not.

When the administration rearranged a few words and phrases and reinstated the moratorium, Feldman found Interior in contempt. In his current order, Feldman said the delay in issuing permits since last year's oil spill was "increasingly inexcusable."

As for a possible oil crisis, it is we who have dug the hole we're in. We could in the short term start issuing those drilling permits being held hostage and in the long term exploit the domestic oil and gas reserves that dwarf anything Saudi Arabia and OPEC may have.

As Jane Van Ryan of the American Petroleum Institute states, the SPR "was established to protect the United States against an interruption of petroleum supplies, such as occurred after the hurricanes Katrina and Rita."

It was not established to respond to or mask the consequences of a deliberate administration policy to have energy prices "necessarily skyrocket" in a futile pursuit of so-called "green" energy, a policy designed to create an artificial shortage orchestrated by an energy secretary, Steven Chu, who once said gas should be at \$8 a gallon.

The administration's energy policy, or lack of one, is inexcusable and outright hypocritical — admitting we need to increase supply to mitigate price hikes at the same time it works to restrict supply to make prices go up. We have plenty of oil here in the U.S. Unfortunately, all our dipsticks are in Washington, D.C.