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On May 4, Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) introduced the Florida Shores Protection and Fairness Act (S.1041). This bill would extend the current oil and gas leasing ban off Florida's coast in the Gulf of Mexico from 2022 until 2027. It would also add Florida to the list of states that are able to receive a share of the revenue generated from drilling in the central and western portions of the Gulf.

The Gulf of Mexico Security Act of 2006 (S.3711) banned offshore energy exploration in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico, and allowed all of the Gulf producing states – meaning each of the states bordering the Gulf of Mexico except Florida – to share the benefits from qualified Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) revenues. These funds can be used by the states for certain conservation and environmental protection efforts, including coastal restoration, hurricane protection, flood control, mitigation of damage to wildlife or natural resources, and infrastructure projects.

Senator Rubio wrote in the Pensacola News Journal that “Florida’s environment and economies are in danger of being affected by rare but major drilling accidents in the Gulf – even with the 125-mile ban in the current moratorium.” According to Senator Rubio, this bill would give Florida a new source of funding, and recognize that the people of Florida should share in some of the benefit as long as their shores are exposed to some of the risks of oil and gas exploration.

S.1041 was referred to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

Sources: Pensacola News Journal, Library of Congress, U.S. Senate
