

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 1, 2009

Contact: Ryan Banfill
(850) 222-1996

Solar Advocates See Potential Boon in Plan to Explore for Energy in Florida Waters

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Florida’s leading advocates for solar energy today announced their support for the proposal to authorize offshore energy exploration for oil and natural gas in Florida waters

The Florida Solar Energy Industries Association, the premier group representing Florida manufacturers, distributors, contractors and retailers who provide solar water heating and solar electric systems, said that revenues from offshore oil and natural gas production should act as a bridge to help Florida adopt alternative and renewable energies for the future.

Florida economists Fishkind & Associates project enabling offshore energy exploration in Florida waters could produce public revenues of between \$2.3 billion and \$12 billion a year – without raising new taxes.

“With Florida expected to face billion-dollar budget shortfalls for at least the next three years, revenues from oil and gas drilling could help our state meet its budget needs while providing a permanent, dedicated revenue source for programs that invest in renewable energy technologies,” said Bruce Kershner, executive director of the Florida Solar Energy Industries Association. “We believe the proposal to tap these energy resources, with stringent environmental protections, can help move our state toward renewable energies that will reduce our country’s dependence on fossil fuels.”

The Florida Solar Energy Industries Association has long been a vocal supporter of the Florida Solar Energy System Incentives Program to provide rebates to homeowners and businesses on the purchase of solar energy equipment, but due to the state’s budget crisis, the program did not receive state funding in 2009. Instead, the program received temporary federal stimulus funds that will disappear in less than two years. Revenues from offshore drilling should be invested in making this program permanent, Kershner said.

“The proposal to drill in Florida state waters has the potential to create a cleaner and wealthier future for Florida if it provides a sustainable funding source for the development of vibrant programs that will help Florida become a leader in the solar energy industry,” Kershner said. “The economic development potential of providing green employment opportunities and attracting high-tech, high-wage renewable energy companies to Florida rivals any real or perceived threat that state-of-the-art offshore drilling poses to Florida.”

In March of 2008, a statewide poll by Mason-Dixon Polling & Research found that 85 percent of those Floridians believe the Legislature should act to encourage investment in solar energy.

For more information on solar energy in Florida, please visit the Florida Solar Energy Industries Association Web site at www.flaseia.org.

###