

NEWS

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Solar Energy Group Stands Firm on Offshore Drilling

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Florida’s leading solar energy group today reiterated its position that revenues from offshore oil and natural gas production in Florida waters should act as a bridge for the state to adopt alternative and renewable energies. In spite of false and erroneous reports, that position is unchanged.

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, made its position clear in a Sept. 8 letter to Rep. Dean Cannon. In the letter, the group stated that so long as the state implemented the highest possible environmental safeguards, it would support the use of revenues from oil and natural gas drilling to invest in renewable energy technologies that will reduce Florida’s reliance on foreign oil and other fossil fuels.

Offshore oil and natural gas production could generate produce public revenues of between \$2.3 billion and \$12 billion a year – without raising new taxes, according to projections by Florida economists Fishkind & Associates.

“The Florida Solar Energy Industry Association believes revenues from oil and gas drilling could provide a 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 Florida’s offshore energy resources, with stringent environmental protections, can help move our state toward renewable energies that will reduce our country’s dependence on fossil fuels over the long term.”

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.”

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

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