

MADISON POLICY DIGEST

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*House Approves Measure That Would End Offshore Oil and Drilling Ban

*Citizens' Not Happy to be Number 1

*Teachers' Union Plans Blitz on No Child Left Behind Act

HOUSE APPROVES MEASURE THAT WOULD END OFFSHORE OIL AND DRILLING BAN

Last Thursday, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to end the offshore drilling ban that had been in effect for over a quarter-century.

Though the House had success in voting to lift the ban, it is still quite uncertain what will happen to the bill in the Senate. Both Florida Senators have vowed to oppose the current version of the House bill, with Sen. Bill Nelson also vowing to filibuster any legislation that would allow drilling in the Gulf of Mexico within 125 miles of Florida's coast. A small group of Florida lawmakers have already attempted to have a piece of legislation passed to allow states to maintain what they call a 125 mile protective zone. This was rejected.

The Sarasota *Herald Tribune* reports, "The eastern and western Gulf of Mexico produces virtually all of the country's offshore oil and gas, with waters off the eastern Gulf, both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and much of Alaska under the drilling moratorium.

"Under the bill, states' share of royalties would increase to 50 percent over 10 years and eventually could rise as high as 75 percent. States currently get less than 5 percent of royalties from offshore oil and gas leases in the central and western Gulf."

For the complete article click here:

<http://www.heraldtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060629/APN/606290803>

CITIZENS NOT HAPPY TO BE NUMBER 1

In existence for only 3 ½ years, the state sponsored Citizens Property Insurance Corp. became Florida's largest property insurer as of July 1. Bruce Douglas, Citizens' board chairman, reported that Citizens will have 1.5 million policyholders by the end of the year.

The *Tampa Tribune* reports, "A growing Citizens could be bad for every homeowner insurance policyholder in Florida because the more policies the company assumes, the more financial risk it takes on. Despite changes enacted by the Florida Legislature this year, policyholders throughout Florida will be on the hook if Citizens has major losses.

“If Citizens has losses above about \$2 billion, its part-time resident policyholders will be assessed first, then its year-round residents will be assessed and, finally, non-Citizens policyholders. Citizens lost more than \$2 billion in 2004 and 2005, and taxpayers and insurance policyholders are picking up the tab.” For the complete article click here: <http://www.tbo.com/news/metro/MGBCHJ7JOPE.html>

TEACHERS’ UNION PLANS BLITZ ON NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT

As the U.S. Congress is attempting to establish more accountability for the nation’s teachers, the National Education Association is arguing that teachers should not be held accountable for what they call environments over which they have no control.

The Sarasota *Herald Tribune* reports, “In addition to increased funding, the union is calling for a reduction in class size to 15 students, professional development resources for teachers, and giving states more flexibility in measuring and reacting to school test performance.”

National Education Association president Reg Weaver is also demanding a national minimum wage of \$40,000 for the nine months that teachers work. For the complete article click here:

<http://www.heraldtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060702/APN/607020670>

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom, must, like men, undergo the fatigue of supporting it.” (Thomas Paine).

OPINION OF THE WEEK

“Estonia Creates an Economic Miracle” by Steve Stanek

“Mart Laar was barely 32 years old in 1992, when he became prime minister of Estonia, a small nation on the Baltic Sea that had just emerged from decades of Communist oppression as a satellite state of the Soviet Union.

“He inherited leadership of a country with 1,000 percent inflation, 30 percent unemployment, and government-owned businesses that were a shambles. Laar's government removed price controls, cut regulations and welfare programs, sold state-owned businesses, introduced a new currency, and instituted a simple, flat-rate income tax that is being emulated in countries across Central and Eastern Europe. The rate has been lowered several times over the years and is now at 20 percent.

“The result? Inflation in Estonia has dropped below 3 percent, unemployment has plunged below 6 percent, and foreign investment has poured in. Estonia has enjoyed the greatest growth in real per-capita income of any of the former Soviet states. Today the country is a member of NATO, the European Union, and the World Trade Organization.”

For the complete article click here:

<http://heartland.org/Article.cfm?artId=19289>

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