

When the Challenger shuttle disaster occurred, Congress did not require NASA to rush the launch of another space shuttle within 60 days.

After Hurricane Katrina, Congress did not require the Army Corps of Engineers to approve new levees within 60 days with the same failed designs.

Following the Three Mile Island nuclear disaster, Congress didn't direct the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to approve licenses for new nuclear facilities within 60 days.

And after the BP oil spill -- the worst environmental disaster in American history -- we should not be

legislatively mandating that the Interior Department gets only 60 days to approve new drilling permits.

We should not also force the Department to use the same inadequate environmental review to hold lease sales that had been scheduled prior to the BP spill.

And we should not be opening vast new areas of coastlines on the East and West coasts to drilling before implementing safety reforms recommended by the independent BP commission.

But that is exactly what the Republican Majority is proposing today -- legislation that will do nothing to improve the safety of offshore drilling and instead send us down the same path that led to the Deepwater Horizon disaster.

The Republican majority is continuing to operate with a pre-spill mentality. Following the BP oil spill, we should be reviewing the lessons, not lessening the review.

The oil industry assurances and promises on which the federal government relied in formulating safety procedures were not worth the paper they were written on. They said blowouts could not happen, they did. They said the rig wouldn't sink, it did. They said the oil could be captured before it reached the shore, it wasn't.

The BP Spill Commission concluded that the causes of the BP spill were “systemic” to the entire industry. But the Republican majority continues to be in denial that reforms are needed to prevent a similar disaster again in the future.

This committee has not held a single legislative hearing on legislation to improve the safety of offshore drilling.

As part of today's hearing, the majority refused to also consider H.R 501, legislation that I have introduced with Representative Holt and other House Democrats to implement the reforms recommended by the BP Commission. The full Committee Chairman has also failed to act upon my requests for testimony from BP, Transocean, Halliburton, and Cameron on the spill, or for testimony from the CEOs of the top five major integrated oil companies who are most active in the Gulf.

We don't need another hearing that pushes the same speed-over-safety attitudes that plagued BP and led to the worst oil spill in our nation's history. We don't need legislation that gives the Interior Department the same amount of time to review a drilling application as landlords give tenants to vacate an apartment. And we don't need another bill that ignores any attempts to end our addiction to oil and move to alternative energy like wind and solar and geothermal.

What we need is legislation that protects our oil industry workers, not the corporate special interests who seek a return to the old status quo. What we need is legislation that encourages innovation, not technological stagnation, and legislation that increases the safety of the oil industry, not just its profits.

We need to encourage reforms that will prevent another disaster, not lead us backwards to a repetition of last summer's environmental nightmare.