

## **Markey Statement at Natural Resources Gas Price Hearing**

WASHINGTON (March 21, 2012) – Today at a hearing on gas prices in the Natural Resources Committee, Rep. Ed Markey (D-Mass.), the top Democrat on the committee, delivered the following statement:

“It’s March and the NCAA basketball tournament is in full swing. Yet, Republicans are trying to create a new special kind of March Madness, where the oil industry and Wall Street speculators are guaranteed a spot in the final four and American consumers are seeded last and given insurmountable odds.

“First, even when drivers are facing skyrocketing gas prices, Republicans support the export of America’s fuel. U.S. oil production is at an 8 year high and our reliance on foreign oil has dropped from 57 percent during President Bush’s last year in office to only 45 percent last year under President Obama. We are drilling.

“But what are the oil companies doing with much of that oil we are producing here in America? They are exporting it. Oil companies actually sent more than \$100 billion worth of our fuel overseas last year – the number one export of the United States of America. Those exports contribute to the \$137 billion in profits big oil made just last year.

“Second, House Republicans unveiled a budget yesterday that protects the \$4 billion in tax breaks Big Oil receives every year while slashing by 85 percent funding for clean energy alternatives --wind and solar -- that can make us less vulnerable to price spikes in the future.

“When millions of Americans are paying \$4 at the pump, Republicans shouldn’t be continuing to protect the \$4 billion in tax subsidies for Big Oil.

“Third, House Republicans oppose cracking down on the Wall Street speculators who are artificially driving up prices. Since Iran threatened to block the Strait of Hormuz at the end of December, Wall Street speculators have turned the oil markets into a crude oil casino, helping to drive up gas prices 61 cents. And what is the Republican answer? The Majority refuses to fully fund the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. That will keep the Wall Street commodities cops off the beat. Meanwhile, Wall Street’s army of lobbyists are suing to delay the CFTC’s new rules establishing position limits on speculative traders.

“This week, I will be sending a letter with dozens of my Democratic colleagues demanding that the appropriators support the preservation of these important reforms and provide full funding for Wall Street cops who are policing Wall Street speculators. I hope that this year the Republican Majority will join us, but if they won’t, we are prepared to take that battle to the House Floor.

“And last but not least, the Republican Majority has also opposed deploying the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which is one weapon that America has in its economic arsenal to curb excessive Wall Street short-term speculation that exploits the fears created by the current situation the world faces with Iran. When President George H.W. Bush, President Clinton,

President George W. Bush and President Obama have deployed oil from the reserve in the past, it has driven down prices immediately. The SPR is a weapon that is aimed straight at the Strait of Hormuz speculators and we should be ready, willing and able to deploy it.

“In the Republican's Big Oil bracket, Big Oil continues sending American oil overseas, Wall Street commodities cops get pulled from the beat, clean energy alternatives to oil get defunded, \$4 billion dollars in annual subsidies go to Big Oil, and we can't even use our nation's oil reserve as a weapon against OPEC and Wall Street speculators. It's a fixed game, and Democrats want a new set of rules that give the underdog consumer a fighting chance.”