

US lawmaker pushes for quick growth of wind power

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The Wilton Wind Energy Center is pictured in 2009 near Wilton, North Dakota. Democratic lawmaker Rush Holt told AFP on Friday that in view of the disastrous oil slick in the Gulf of Mexico the United States should quickly focus on developing wind power along its coasts.

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"We should be moving rapidly on those projects," said the New Jersey representative.

Holt's comments followed Interior Secretary Ken Salazar's go-ahead Wednesday to the first US [offshore wind farm](#) project, a billion-dollar effort to tap the steady wind in the Atlantic near northeastern Massachusetts state, after years of legal wrangling.

"One of the points that I made today is we can't wait nine years for the projects along New Jersey coast, the wind projects, to be approved," said Holt.

Holt and fellow New Jersey Democrats, Senators Robert Menendez and Frank Lautenberg and representative Frank Pallone, were in Ocean Grove, in their home state, to push for the development of offshore wind power.

The lawmakers called on President Barack Obama to reverse his decision last month to back expanding offshore oil drilling in US territorial waters.

"We found it was a mistake in March when the president proposed it. We would have continued to ask for reversal in any case. But now in light of this obvious and tragic failure in offshore drilling and human and environmental cost for it, there is reason for the president to reverse himself," Holt told AFP.

Despite the explosion and sinking of an [oil platform](#) last week in the Gulf of Mexico that killed 11 people and caused one of the biggest oil spills in US history, Obama on Friday said he still believed "domestic oil production is an important part of our overall strategy for energy security," as long as it is "done responsibly."

Holt, 61, a former physics professor, disagreed: "Fossil fuels are just not sustainable over the long run for all sorts of reason."

"The wind resources are really quite large and over time are much larger than oil resources," he said, adding that offshore wind power could supply "more than half of the electricity need of the eastern United States."

"Fossil fuel are dirty and dangerous," Holt said also alluding to the April 5 explosion in a West Virginia coal mine that killed 29 men, the worst US mine accident in decades.

With 130 wind turbines, the giant Cape Wind project in the scenic channel between Cape Cod and the resort islands of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket off Massachusetts is expected to generate 75 percent of energy needs of Cape Cod and the nearby islands.

US investment in [wind power](#) projects grew a record 39 percent between 2008 and 2009.

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