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Washington, DC - Congressman Travis Childers (D-MS) voted today in support of legislation to speed oil development in the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A), but announced that Congress needs to go further to open up lands for oil drilling in the face of the country's current energy crisis.

"Today's legislation is a small step in the right direction," said Congressman Childers. "I initially voted to prevent consideration of this bill because it does not go far enough towards fighting rising gas prices and solving our nation's energy crisis. To expand our domestic oil supply and decrease U.S. dependence on foreign oil, Congress must make available all appropriate land resources.

"But this legislation did come to the floor for consideration. While the bill's initiatives are insufficient, they would make some progress towards opening up more land for oil exploration and development.

"Additionally, the most recent version of the 'use it or lose it' energy approach included in today's legislation loosens the requirements set on oil companies for retaining their leases on the over 91 million acres of federally owned land in their control. While this measure is not perfect, I am committed to moving in the right direction towards lowering gas prices for the people of North Mississippi.

"Provisions for new oil drilling and looser 'use it or lose it' requirements make today's legislation more favorable than previous legislation drafted by House leadership. This is proof that leadership is listening to calls from me and my fellow members of the centrist Blue Dog Coalition to legislate new drilling and promote U.S. energy independence."

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