



## **Poll: 75 percent of Floridians back offshore drilling**

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**By: Jim Ash**

TALLAHASSEE -- Offshore drilling proponents touted a new poll today that shows 75 percent of Floridians support offshore drilling.

Associated Industries of Florida commissioned the poll and McLaughlin & Associates interviewed 600 likely Florida voters Aug. 12-13. The margin of error is 4 percentage points.

The poll showed a 75 percent support level for the open-ended question of whether drilling should be allowed. That drops to 15 percent, however, when the respondents are asked if drilling should be allowed "anywhere." Opposition to any drilling registered 20 percent, with 5 percent undecided.

The poll comes as Gov. Charlie Crist and House and Senate leaders are eyeing a potential special session in October or November to approve a gambling compact with the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Crist has said he would be open to taking up offshore drilling in the special session.

AIF President Barney Bishop said the association traditionally conducts a poll this time of year, just before its annual convention, and that any connection with the potential special session is only a coincidence. The poll also showed that Floridians are opposed to Obama's health care reforms.

However, Bishop said the results should spur lawmakers to lift Florida's offshore drilling ban during the special session. It's related to the compact because both would raise revenue for the state, he said.

Sen. Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island, and Rep. Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park, who are in line to be the next Senate president and House speaker, are big drilling supporters, so there is a good chance the issue will surface in the special session, Bishop said.

"We've got the Senate president designee on our side and the speaker designee on our side and we've got the people on our side," Bishop said. "That's all we need."

Drilling opponents point out that a previous attempt to lift the drilling ban failed during the regular session in the spring because supporters brought it out in the final days of the session.

The issue is also too complex to ram through a limited special session, they say.

"Anyone can come up with a poll that shows that people agree with them," said Eric Draper, a veteran lobbyist for Audubon of Florida. "Special sessions are places where they pass bills that have been previously agreed on. Nobody agrees on this."