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Energy bill bans drilling atop Roan Plateau

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Washington — An energy bill introduced this week in the House would ban drilling on federal lands atop the Roan Plateau, two Colorado lawmakers announced today.

Democratic Reps. John Salazar and Mark Udall inserted language into the bill to prevent all drilling on the plateau except when it originates from private land or wells at the base of the mountain.

The House bill, a major energy package that includes energy-efficiency measures and ends many oil-company subsidies, is expected to be debated Friday. If passed, it will need to be reconciled with a Senate energy bill passed last month that does not include similar language on the plateau.

The Roan Plateau has been a source of controversy as environmentalists claim that drilling at its summit would disrupt the area's rich wildlife.

Energy industry officials argued today that the BLM plan would ease the nation's dependence on foreign oil and vowed to keep Salazar and Udall's language out of any final energy bill.

"We're disappointed this language was secretly slipped in the bill at the last minute with no consideration by the House Natural Resources Committee," said Marc Smith, executive director of the Independent Petroleum Association of Mountain States.

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Kudos to Salazar and Udall for introducing this bill and let's hope the democratic majority in Congress will finally pay off with its passage. With so many other areas available for oil and gas exploration, and so many environmentally sensitive techniques available, the industry should change course and not drill where the vast majority of Americans don't want them to drill (ie, Roan, ANWAR, wilderness areas, etc.). The industry should also realize that as soon as GWB is out of office, the free ride is over. Might as well start doing business is

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