

## Bringing the feds into the 21st century

*Published: Monday, July 11, 2016 at 6:01 a.m.*

A local congressman has begun an effort to modernize the process of government oil and gas lease sales, and he should be commended.

U.S. Rep. Garret Graves, R-Baton Rouge, introduced a bill that would move those oil and gas lease sales online, taking advantage of technology that the whole world uses.

“Dealing with the government is like going back in time, and workflows the private sector retired decades ago are still alive and well,” Graves said in a news release.

“In the real world, work gets done online — that's why I introduced this bill,” Graves said. “Internet-based oil and gas leasing will open investment opportunities and competition for additional businesses, improve the transparency and efficiency of the process. Giving more companies a chance to work ... offshore will also increase energy revenue sharing to support the resiliency of Louisiana's coastal ecosystems and communities on which our nation's economy relies.”

Graves' bill, the Innovation in Offshore Leasing Act, is being co-sponsored by a California Democrat, Rep. Alan Lowenthal. The bill got its first hearing Wednesday by the Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, where it received a strong reception from subcommittee Chairman Doug Lamborn, a Colorado Republican.

Ideally, the new change — if it is adopted — will be a step forward for the oil and gas industries and for the government agency that oversees the sales.

And it's a change that simply makes sense.

People from elementary school to adulthood conduct schoolwork and business on the Internet, and there is every reason for the federal government to embrace technology that is so readily available to everyone who will be bidding on oil leases.

Graves makes an excellent point, too, when he says the Internet technology will make the entire process more visible to the public.

Graves also said the Bureau of Ocean Management deputy director has voiced his approval for the effort, meaning that it will likely be an improvement on all fronts.

Graves deserves credit for seeing a need in the federal system and coming up with a reasonable response to address that need. He also deserves a lot of credit for securing bipartisan support for the measure.

The process of bidding on oil and gas leases might not be the most pressing issue facing the federal government, but any improvement that brings the government into the current century is a welcome step forward.

Editorials represent the opinion of the newspaper, not of any individual.

Copyright © 2016 DailyComet.com — All rights reserved. Restricted use only.