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CONSERVATIVES FOR RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date:** November 6, 2025

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**The Trump Administration's Plan to Roll Back Oil and Gas Bonding Requirements Will Cost Taxpayers Billions, New Analysis Shows**

*Lowering Bond Amounts Will Risk Leaving Taxpayers on the Hook to Pay Billions to Clean Up Industry's Abandoned Oil and Gas Wells on National Public Lands*

(Washington, DC) – Today, Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship released a [new analysis](#) on the significant risk to American taxpayers if the Trump administration and Department of the Interior (DOI) lower onshore oil and gas bonding requirements for drilling on national public lands. Following new oil and gas leasing policies passed by Congress under the 'One Big Beautiful Bill Act' that essentially transferred control of [over 200 million acres](#) of public lands to industry, the analysis estimates that oil and gas companies are poised to drill as many as 3.8 million new wells on our national public lands in coming years. The new report finds that this, combined with the Trump administration's [anticipated rollback](#) of key bonding safeguards, means **oil and gas companies are about to have the green light to potentially pass as much as \$753.5 billion in financial liabilities onto the shoulders of local communities and taxpayers.**

In 2023, Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship found taxpayers to [already be on the hook](#) for up to \$15 billion to clean up after bad actors in the oil and gas industry—a result of strategic bankruptcy filings and other underhanded means that these companies have historically exploited to avoid their clean-up obligations. This is one of the reasons why the Bureau of Land Management took fiscally responsible steps in 2024 to address such scams head-on by adjusting minimum bonding requirements. Adequate bonding helps ensure that companies are no longer allowed to game the system, and instead are held to the promise they make as a condition of their drilling permits to plug their wells when finished drilling.

Reversing these long-overdue updates to the federal bonding system is patently unfair, and will pass the fiscal burden of reclamation costs back onto local communities and taxpayers, as opposed to those who directly profited from these wells. In fact, in a

[recent survey from the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas](#), one industry executive even acknowledged that the number of orphaned wells across the nation will undoubtedly only increase over time unless companies with “a business plan of ‘bad bank’” take that responsibility seriously.

Not surprisingly, recent polling shows that the [vast majority of Western voters](#) believe oil and gas companies—rather than hardworking taxpayers—should take responsibility for clean-up and land restoration costs after drilling on publicly owned lands.

*“There’s nothing remotely conservative about this fiscally irresponsible move by the Administration to enable industry bad actors to scam American taxpayers out of billions,” said **Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship** president **David Jenkins**. “Combined with the leasing mandates recently signed into law, this helter-skelter approach to oil and gas development throws sportsmen and other outdoor enthusiasts under the bus, subverting all other public land and natural resource values to—as 18<sup>th</sup> century conservative statesman Edmund Burke put it—‘an insatiable pursuit after more.’”*

*“Adequate bonding requirements are clearly needed now more than ever, but instead the Administration plans to give irresponsible operators the green light to bilk American taxpayers out of billions to plug and clean up abandoned wells, wells that oil and gas companies promised to plug and clean up as a condition of their permits,” **Jenkins added**. “This all but guarantees that average Americans—along with their children and grandchildren—will be dealing with the catastrophic consequences of these shortsighted decisions for years to come, while the scammers, apparently favored by this Administration, laugh all the way to the bank.”*

*“Turning back the clock on recently updated federal bonding requirements risks a return to an outdated system that failed taxpayers for decades. For years, thousands of wells were covered by bonds far below actual cleanup costs—doing little to stop bad actors from abandoning their wells and shifting cleanup costs onto federal and state taxpayers. **Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship** depicts a stark reality in which efforts to ramp up production while weakening taxpayer safeguards could result in millions of under-bonded wells and billions in potential reclamation liabilities falling to taxpayers,” said **Autumn Hanna, Taxpayers for Common Sense** in response to this new report.*

Read the full report [HERE](#).

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