Concerning Obama's new offshore drilling policv, it's hard to disagree with the sentiment expressed by Matt Yglesias, Steve Benen, and Kevin Drum: why give a concession without getting anything in return? House Minority Leader John Boehner responded with a typically reality- and lithium-deprived statement. saying that "the Obama Administration continues to defy the will of the American people" by not lifting the moratorium on offshore drilling everywhere, adding that "Americans simply don't want this backdoor national energy tax that will drive up energy and manufacturing costs and destroy jobs in our states and local communities."

So much for bipartisanship, although in fairness Lindsay Graham, the Senate Republican who is seemingly most interested in a climate bill, had some more positive things to say.

What is going on? A few thoughts:

Most importantly, remember that at this satge, the drilling moratorium is simply an executive branch position. The coastlines are not protected by statute. Obama knows that a Republican President could come in and strip all the coasts of protection, as George W. Bush tried to do in 2008 when the Congressional moratorium lapsed. Obama might well insist on protecting those coastlines outside of his proposal — the majority of US coastlines — in any forthcoming energy bill.

Because this policy is strictly an executive branch issue at this stage, if Obama doesn't get what he wants, he can always reverse it, arguing that he got no cooperation from the Republicans. He moved first, operated in good faith, and the GOP did not respond.

This relates closely to what a Democratic Hill staffer notes: the headlines will read, "Obama allows for offshore drilling", making it clear that he is the reasonable grown-up in the room, and forcing the Republicans to act even more extreme. Meanwhile, Obama's plan leaves out the Pacific coast, New England, and environmentally sensitive areas of Alaska, taking the political bite out of it. And remember that for the vast majority of the areas proposed to be opened to drilling, any real exploration will have to await environmental review and a myriad of other studies.

Put another way, Obama might not be making any concession at all, essentially forcing the Republicans to meet him halfway or look worse in the process. It's not clear to me that this strategy will work, because it relies on the media narrative to

be “Reasonable Obama and Crazy Republicans.” But that’s the way the man works. Essentially, it’s like aikido: use your opponent’s energy against him. Maybe.