Offshore Rig --
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In his State of the Union address this past January, President Obama found a way to equate greenhouse gas reduction and clean energy jobs with an increase in offshore drilling. If he were to agree to more offshore leases, perhaps reticent members of Congress would support the kind of energy legislation needed to address climate change. This week, the president took initial steps to open additional tracts off of the Atlantic and Gulf coasts.

In January, he said:

"But to create more of these clean energy jobs, we need more production, more efficiency, more incentives. And that means building a new generation of safe, clean nuclear power plants in this country. (Applause.) It means making tough decisions about opening new offshore areas for oil and gas development. (Applause.) It means continued investment in advanced biofuels and clean coal technologies. (Applause.) And, yes, it means passing a comprehensive energy and climate bill with incentives that will finally make clean energy the profitable kind of energy in America. (Applause.)"

With this week's announcement, he offered the same strategy:

"I know that we can come together to pass comprehensive energy and climate legislation that's going to foster new energy — new industries, create millions of new jobs, protect our planet, and help us become more energy independent."

Will this concession bring the President the votes he seeks? Senate Republican Mitch McConnell and House Republican Leader John Boehner each characterized this a nice first step, but called for other oil-drilling concessions. Some environmental advocates expressed dismay. Stay tuned for further developments.