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# Fossil fuel industry celebrates the end of crude oil export ban

By Kyle Feldscher • 12/18/15 1:40 PM

After 40 years, American oil producers will be able to export crude oil overseas, and the fossil fuel industry could not be happier.

American Petroleum Institute President and CEO Jack Gerard called the votes in Congress Friday to lift the ban as "a historic moment in our energy renaissance." Lifting the oil export ban was one portion of the \$1.1 trillion spending bill that sailed through Congress Friday morning.

"Lifting this ban will help put downward pressure on gas prices, create jobs, grow our economy and lower our trade deficit," Gerard said.

Lifting the ban on crude oil exports, passed in the wake of the early 1970s Arab oil embargo that caused an energy crisis, was seen as the top legislative priority for the fossil fuel industry. They contend that being able to sell oil overseas to friendly countries will lessen the American oil glut by expanding market share for U.S. companies. The Iran nuclear deal greatly helped their cause this summer, because the industry and Republican supporters were able to argue that Iran would be able to export its oil, but U.S. companies could not.

President Obama opposes lifting the oil export ban, but the White House said earlier this week that he would sign the spending bill even if it was included in the final legislation. White House spokesman Josh Earnest said Obama was pleased with the amount of clean energy tax credits in the bill, which the administration believes will help offset repealing the oil export ban.

The Independent Petroleum Association of America called lifting the oil export ban a shot in the arm for the industry.

"The more turmoil occurs around the world, the more our friends and allies are looking to the United States to be a stable supplier of energy," said Barry Russell, president and CEO of the group. "To strengthen our nation's energy future, America must have policies in place that reflect modern energy markets, rather than policies based on a market that existed in the 1970s."

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, primarily pushed repealing the oil export ban in the Senate.

Murkowski began talking about repealing the ban as early as January 2014, one of the first voices in Washington to bring up the ban as a possible legislative issue. Her state has been allowed to export crude on a limited basis with presidential approval and other special restrictions, but the repeal would mean no restrictions.

She said lifting the ban would be good for the economies of the United States and its allies.

"By lifting the domestic crude oil export ban, we are sending a signal to the world that our nation is ready to be a global energy superpower. With crude exports comes job creation, economic growth, new revenues, prosperity and enhanced energy security for our allies and ourselves," Murkowski said.

Opponents of lifting the ban have looked at it as sending the wrong message after the Paris climate deal.

Michael Brune, executive director of the Sierra Club, called lifting the ban "an outrage."

"This early Christmas gift to Big Oil, ExxonMobil and the Koch brothers from congressional Republicans will send American jobs overseas, rip up more iconic American landscapes to pump oil that nobody needs, and increase the carbon pollution that's driving the climate crisis," he said.