The leading US oil and gas industry group has highlighted deregulation, increased access for offshore drilling and more support for pipeline construction as priorities for Donald Trump’s administration and the new Republican-dominated Congress.

In a speech (http://energytomorrow.org/soae) in Washington on Wednesday, Jack Gerard, president of the American Petroleum Institute, said the US had a “once in a generation opportunity” to create more middle-class jobs, reduce income inequality and strengthen national security by increasing oil and gas production.

“We must break from the recent past [and] re-examine the regulatory onslaught of the last few years that has proposed or imposed some 145 regulations and other executive actions on our industry, and instead work to implement smart energy
"regulations," Mr Gerard said.

The API is the most influential of the US oil industry organisations, with about 625 members (http://www.api.org/membership/members) including large US companies such as ExxonMobil (http://markets.ft.com/data/equities/tearsheet/summary?s=us:XOM) and Chevron (http://markets.ft.com/data/equities/tearsheet/summary?s=us:CVX), and the American divisions of international groups including BP (http://markets.ft.com/data/equities/tearsheet/summary?s=uk:BP.), Royal Dutch Shell and Saudi Aramco.

Mr Trump’s election, and the Republican majorities in the Senate and House of Representatives, have raised hopes in the industry that the policy environment will become more supportive of its objectives than under President Barack Obama.

Mr Trump has argued that the administration should do more to help oil and gas production, and he has selected several industry executives, investors or supporters to his team. Rex Tillerson (http://next.ft.com/content/c04f96e0-c21e-11e6-9bca-2b93a6856354), Exxon chief executive, is Mr Trump’s pick for secretary of state (http://next.ft.com/content/98038198-d23f-11e6-9341-7393bb2e1b51), and Scott Pruitt (http://next.ft.com/content/1a0cf6c4-bcc4-11e6-8b45-b8b81dd5d080), who as attorney-general of Oklahoma has been an ally of the oil industry, is his choice for head of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The federal regulations Mr Gerard identified as among the highest priorities for being blocked by the new administration and Congress, included curbs on leaks of methane — the main constituent of natural gas — from oil and gas production facilities and rules on emissions from offshore installations.

Although US oil and gas production have risen strongly over the past decade, Mr Gerard argued that the industry’s success was “even more remarkable in light of the many constraints imposed on the industry by regulations designed more to stifle domestic fossil fuel development than to benefit the American consumer”.

As an example, he cited the continuing restrictions in 94 per cent of US federal waters that prevent offshore drilling, which is allowed only in a section of the Gulf of Mexico.
These restrictions predated Mr Obama, and although he moved towards relaxing them in March 2010, the plan was abandoned after BP’s Deepwater Horizon disaster the following month.

A tentative move in 2015 towards allowing drilling on the Atlantic coast was abandoned last year. Then at the end of the year, Mr Obama attempted to put a permanent block on drilling in most of the Arctic waters north of Alaska and on the US Atlantic coast from Virginia to Maine.

Mr Gerard said opening up those offshore areas for oil and gas production could create 800,000 jobs and raise $200bn in government revenues.

He also highlighted how “a small, vocal minority have taken it upon themselves to target these [pipeline] projects to advance their anti-fossil fuel political agenda”.

Environmental activists helped push Mr Obama into rejecting the proposed Keystone XL oil pipeline from Canada to the US and into ordering a delay to the Dakota Access oil pipeline from North Dakota to Illinois. Campaigns have also delayed gas pipelines in the north-east of the US.

Mr Gerard said those pipeline projects would create jobs and reduce energy costs for consumers, adding: “That’s the kind of progress the American people made clear they want to see in the months and years ahead from their elected leaders, from municipal governments to federal agencies.”
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