

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 18, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary of the Interior
Mail Stop 6242
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240-0001

Dear Secretary Zinke:

We request you add public meetings in Virginia Beach and on the Eastern Shore of Virginia as part of the public comment period for the Draft Proposed Program of the proposed 2019-2024 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program.

While we appreciate the scheduled meetings in Richmond and in close proximity to Northern Virginia in Washington, D.C., it is important for residents of Virginia's coastal areas to have the opportunity to attend meetings in their own communities. The Hampton Roads region is a major population center. Virginia Beach is in fact Virginia's most populous city, followed by its neighbors Norfolk and Chesapeake (Richmond is 4th). This region has no currently scheduled public meetings, and the Eastern Shore is even more isolated from the announced meetings.

The regional economy in Hampton Roads and on the Eastern Shore relies heavily on sectors potentially affected by offshore drilling – Department of Defense installations, the Port of Virginia, tourism, outdoor recreation, fishing, oyster and clam aquaculture, and other federal facilities like NASA-Wallops. Residents of this region would be most directly impacted by a change in offshore drilling policy, and their significant concerns deserve to be heard in person.

You stated in your announcement removing Florida from consideration for offshore drilling that "Local voice matters." We strongly agree. That is why we request Virginia coastal localities be granted the opportunity to make their voices heard.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Mark R. Warner
U.S. Senator



Tim Kaine
U.S. Senator