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## **Editorial: Keep drilling well offshore**

Gov. Pat McCrory is urging the federal government not to impose a 50-nautical-mile buffer between our beaches and any offshore drilling for oil and gas.

He told a U.S. House subcommittee on April 15 that such a buffer "unnecessarily puts much of North Carolina's most accessible undiscovered resources under lock and key."

He urged Congress to give states a share of the money from offshore drilling, and touted the jobs it would create.

McCrory said a 50-mile buffer could make up to 40 percent of the state's oil and gas unavailable, and puts much of the rest beyond the continental shelf.

He raises good points, and we're aware that domestic production has helped lower gasoline prices.

But we're skeptical that the gains of tapping those offshore reserves will be worth the risk to our water quality, the coastal tourism economy, and our area's ability to attract affluent retirees who add more to the tax base than they require in services.

North Carolina's beaches consistently win praise for their water quality as well as quality of life. The National Resources Defense Council ranked our beaches fifth in the nation in water quality for 2014, and gave Sunset Beach a "Superstar Beaches" designation.

According to the state Department of Commerce, tourists spent \$561.86 million in Brunswick, New Hanover and Pender counties in 2013, accounting for more than 11,000 jobs.

Commercial and recreational fishing contributes millions of dollars and thousands of jobs in North Carolina.

We want to protect those industries.