

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 17, 2017

The Honorable Ryan Zinke:  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

We are writing to express our extreme concern over your agency's proposed revision of the 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program. We believe the existing program correctly excludes areas from the leasing program that pose significant environmental, economic, and cultural risk, as well as face strong community opposition. We urge you to maintain the protections and exclusions outlined in the current 2017-2022 Program.

The Department of Interior spent over three years and incorporated over one million public comments in developing the final 2017-2022 Program. It is unclear what new scientific evidence you anticipate discovering in the 45-day window your agency has allotted for public comment that was not previously known and analyzed. At a time when the Administration has proposed a 12% cut to your agency's budget, it is especially concerning that you would expend the time, personnel, and resources to revise a plan that is current through 2022 without a scientific justification. We strongly oppose this effort, and urge you to maintain the current 2017-2022 Program.

Specifically, the current program excludes leases in the Arctic Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean, off the Pacific Coast and in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico. Your agency has thoroughly documented the risks of exploration in the Arctic Ocean, as well as the critical ecosystem functions, fragile ecology, and dependence of local communities on subsistence hunting and fishing that would be jeopardized in the likely event of an oil spill. Allowing oil and gas drilling off the East Coast would threaten the tourism and fishing economies, beaches and coastlines of those states. Indeed, since 2015, municipal governments on the East Coast passed over 120 bipartisan resolutions opposing drilling in the Atlantic.

Similarly, every Senator along the West Coast has sought to protect the nearly 650,000 jobs in the fishing, tourism, and recreation industries and the \$44 billion coastal economy from the impacts of offshore drilling. In the Eastern Gulf of Mexico, the Department of Defense has repeatedly expressed support for an extension of the existing moratorium in order to protect its critical testing and training range.

Given the time and public input devoted to the final 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program, we strongly oppose any effort to reopen this program to expand leases in

these areas over the opposition of the impacted communities and the scientific consensus. We urge you to keep the 2017-2022 program in place.

We look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



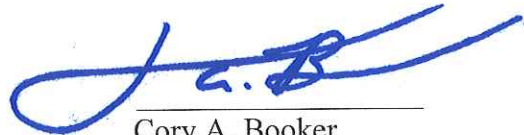
Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Bill Nelson  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Al Franken  
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator




Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



---

Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



---

Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



---

Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator




---

Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



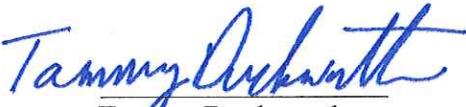
---

Jack Reed  
United States Senator



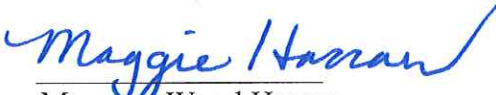
---

Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator




---

Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



---

Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator



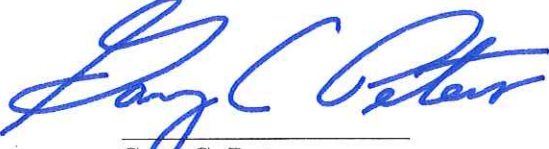
---

Patty Murray  
United States Senator



---

Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator



---

Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator



---

Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator

*Mazie K. Hirono*

Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator

*Patrick Leahy*

Patrick Leahy  
United States Senator

*Debbie Stabenow*

Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator

*Dick Durbin*

Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

*Sherrod Brown*

Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

*Catherine Cortez Masto*

Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator