

August 30, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House of Representatives
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-107, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Hoyer,

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters, we commend your commitment to advancing a budget reconciliation package that makes a meaningful contribution toward addressing the climate crisis. Toward that end, we urge you to ensure budget reconciliation ends new federal leasing for offshore oil and gas drilling and enacts meaningful offshore oil and gas program reforms to address the significant financial risks current policies pose to taxpayers and the federal government. As the House takes on the significant task of investing in our climate future, including offshore oil and gas reforms in the reconciliation package can also raise significant federal revenues and increase taxpayer returns.

Ending new leasing for offshore oil and gas would not only help to preserve the health of our oceans and coastal environment, but also support thousands of jobs in industries like tourism, recreation, and fishing that rely on clean, oil-free coastlines and beaches. Catastrophic oil spills like the 2010 BP *Deepwater Horizon* disaster pose a huge risk to businesses that depend upon a healthy ocean to survive. Toxic oil poisons marine wildlife, causes beach closures, and shuts down lucrative fishing areas. Permanently protecting our coasts from new offshore drilling will safeguard our coastal jobs and economies from the next drilling disaster and ensure cleaner coasts and a healthier ocean for generations to come.

The economic activity that offshore drilling threatens and the climate disasters it helps fuel are why support for permanent protections from new offshore drilling are so widespread and bipartisan. Currently, more than [390 coastal municipalities](#) have formally opposed drilling off their coast, along with every East and West Coast governor, and tens of thousands of businesses.

In addition to ending new leasing for offshore drilling, reforms are also critical to address the decades-long policies that have subsidized offshore fossil fuel production on the Outer Continental Shelf. [Ninety-eight percent](#) of current offshore oil and gas development is in the Western and Central Gulf of Mexico. It consists of offshore and onshore pipelines, additional onshore infrastructure, vehicular and vessel traffic, as well as abandoned and improperly decommissioned infrastructure. Any and all of this development presents the risks of catastrophic spills due to negligence, human error, and increasingly severe weather as the result of a changing climate. All of this has been underwritten by federal taxpayers, costing the federal government [hundreds of millions of dollars](#) in lost revenue. Policies mandating increased safety disclosures and reporting requirements and remedying the lack of proper oversight of active and decommissioned offshore oil and gas infrastructure would help pay for other priorities and reduce handouts to industry that subsidize offshore fossil fuel development.

In addition to the economic benefits of ending new leasing and enacting programmatic reforms, the significant contribution toward addressing the climate crisis is also clear. A [recent analysis](#) also found that permanently protecting all unleased federal waters could prevent over 19 billion tons of greenhouse gas emissions, which is equivalent to taking every car in the nation off the road for 15 years. It would also prevent more than \$720 billion in damage associated with climate change to people, property, and the environment. For comparison, this is like losing the entire economy of a major city, like Washington, D.C., Boston, or Atlanta, for an entire year. Offshore drilling for fossil fuels generates greenhouse gas pollutants like carbon dioxide and methane at every step along the way. Protecting our oceans and coasts from new drilling is our best chance to prevent these emissions from ever entering the atmosphere and wreaking havoc on our lives and livelihoods.

Now is the time to act through important reforms and by ending new offshore oil and gas leasing. Protecting our climate, ocean, and coastal economies from dangerous offshore drilling benefits our climate and our economy. Congress has a narrow opportunity to enact these protections during budget reconciliation, and we are counting on your leadership to protect our coastal communities and take strong action on climate change.

Sincerely,

Oceana

Earthjustice

Environment America

Environmental Defense Center

Friends of the Earth

Healthy Gulf

League of Conservation Voters

National Aquarium

Natural Resources Defense Council

NC League of Conservation Voters

North Carolina Council of Churches

Ocean Conservancy

Ocean Defense Initiative

Oregon Coast Aquarium

Sierra Club

Southern Environmental Law Center

Surfrider Foundation

CC: Representative Raúl Grijalva, Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources; Representative John Yarmuth, Chairman, Committee on the Budget; and Representative Richard E. Neal, Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means