

January 14, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke  
Secretary  
United States Department of Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

We write in regard to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's (BOEM) National Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program, which as you know is currently working under the approved 2017-2022 Five-Year Program. Following Executive Order 13795 and Secretarial Order 3350, BOEM initiated a new proposed Five-Year Program from 2019-2024 that proposes oil and gas lease sales in 25 of the 26 OCS planning areas and calls for nine lease sales in the Atlantic Ocean, including two in the North Atlantic. We write in strong opposition to any proposal that includes oil and gas drilling off the coast of New Jersey, which puts at risk the strength of New Jersey's economy and the health of the state's unique marine ecosystem.

The Jersey shore is our pride and joy, and as such has long enjoyed protection from oil and gas development by residents, stakeholders, and elected officials – Republicans and Democrats alike – for decades. The Obama Administration's proposal to include the Mid-Atlantic for oil and gas lease sales when developing the current Five-Year Program was met with strong bipartisan opposition simply because of the Mid-Atlantic's proximity to New Jersey. This new proposed program now directly opens all offshore waters along New Jersey's 130 miles of coastline through its proposal to pursue two lease sales in the North Atlantic. Oil spills do not respect state borders which means drilling anywhere off the Atlantic Coast puts New Jersey's shore in danger.



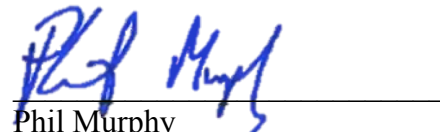
Each year our state's coastal economy generates millions of dollars in revenue, and provides hundreds of thousands of jobs in industries that depend on protecting New Jersey's picturesque beaches and coastal environment. As you have already heard from New Jersey stakeholders and elected officials since the announcement of the proposed plan last week, New Jersey's boating, commercial, and recreational fishing industries are critical components of the state's economy. In the wake of Superstorm Sandy, our seafood industry cannot afford the possibility of another disaster like an oil spill that would threaten their livelihoods.

Earlier this week, you determined that because Florida's coasts rely heavily on tourism as an economic driver, Florida's offshore waters would be removed from consideration under the new proposed program. We agree with your assessment that drilling for oil and gas offshore could

negatively impact a coastal state's tourism industry, and New Jersey is no exception to that rule. The New Jersey tourism industry accounts for one out of 10 jobs in the state's workforce, and this industry has continued to grow year after year. Iconic shore destinations from Asbury Park to Cape May attract visitors from across the world and deserve to be protected.

You have said that your responsibility to evaluate our nation's offshore oil and gas leasing plan will emphasize the consideration of local and state voices. We write to demonstrate that when it comes to protecting New Jersey's coast, New Jersey speaks with one voice, united in opposition to allowing drilling off our shores. It is for these reasons that we urge you to immediately withdraw consideration of the Atlantic from the Five-Year Program, and echo the calls from our colleagues in New Jersey and across the country for you to visit coastal communities for a first-hand account of how devastating the impacts of expanded offshore drilling would be to coastal states' economies.

Sincerely,

  
Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator  
Robert Menendez  
United States Senator  
Chris Christie  
Governor  
Phil Murphy  
Governor-Elect