

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

January 30, 2015

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to express our deep concerns with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's newly released 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program (Five-Year Plan), which proposes opening the Atlantic Ocean for the first time to oil and gas development. The plan's proposal for oil production in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia would put New Jersey's economy and shore communities at significant risk. We strongly urge you to consider removing all Atlantic planning areas prior to the issuance of the next draft of the Five-Year Plan.

The economic and environmental devastation of the Deepwater Horizon tragedy far exceeded what many believed would be the worst-case scenario for an offshore oil accident. But rather than devoting themselves fully to improving the safety of existing offshore infrastructure, the oil industry seems more focused on expanding their footprint while continuing to fight against the penalties assessed and safeguards implemented following the accident. At a time when New Jerseyans are still working to rebuild their lives after Hurricane Sandy, the last thing we need is the prospect of a manmade disaster from an oil spill.

In our home state of New Jersey, and for shore towns up and down the Atlantic coast, offshore oil drilling would present a risk to communities and businesses that depend on a clean and thriving coastline. New Jersey's tourism industry generates \$38 billion a year and directly supports 312,000 jobs—a number that rises to almost half a million jobs, or nearly 10 percent of the State's workforce, when you also consider indirect jobs. Our seafood industry supports over 50,000 jobs, and the state has one of the largest saltwater recreational fishing industries in the nation. New Jersey's commercial fishing industry alone generates over \$7.9 billion annually. In addition to our businesses, the value of people's homes would take a significant hit from an oil spill. According to one estimate, the 2012 insured value of all coastal properties in New Jersey totaled \$713 billion. All of these critical economic drivers would be jeopardized by an oil spill in the Atlantic.


Creating reliable, domestic sources of energy is key to ensuring our Nation's economic strength and national security—but expanding fossil fuel production only further ties us to the energy sources of the past. According to new data, even modest developments in offshore wind power have the potential to create nearly double the jobs, and almost twice as much electricity when compared with offshore oil and gas production. Your Administration has recognized this

opportunity by taking initial steps towards conducting an offshore wind leasing auction off the South Jersey coast, which has the potential to create jobs and abundant clean energy for our region. We urge you to consider focusing your Administration's offshore energy production on clean, limitless wind power that can coexist with, rather than compromise, our marine ecosystems.

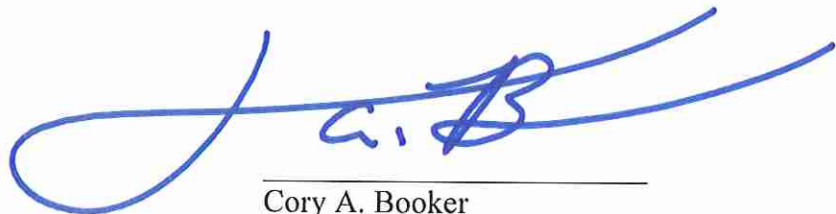
Your Presidency has been marked by significant environmental achievements, with your Administration overseeing historic gains in corporate average fuel economy, establishing the world's largest marine sanctuary in the Pacific Ocean, and issuing an ambitious proposal to limit carbon pollution from new and existing power plants. Within the new draft Five-Year Plan, the proposals to protect the Pacific Ocean and portions of the Arctic from offshore drilling will help preserve these natural resources for future generations. We support these efforts and stand by much of your Administration's environmental policy. However, it is critical that the Atlantic Ocean receive the same commitment as these other precious natural resources. Rather than opening the door for exploitation by the oil and gas industry, it is our sincere hope that protection of the Atlantic Ocean will become a part of your environmental legacy.

We would welcome the opportunity to host you or members of your Administration in New Jersey to discuss these concerns first-hand with the business owners, fishermen, and community advocates who would be most impacted by an oil spill. These are the people that stand to lose much more than the oil industry could ever gain by drilling in the Atlantic. Additionally, we ask that you consider holding at least one public outreach and comment meeting regarding the draft plan within the State of New Jersey. Finally, we strongly urge you to consider removing all Atlantic planning areas prior to issuing the next iteration of the Five-Year Plan, and thank you for your attention to this vital matter.


Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress