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Statement for the Record

**Bureau of Ocean Energy Management Informational Meeting on the Draft Environmental Impact
Statement for the 5-Year Oil and Gas Leasing Program for 2017- 2022**

Wednesday, March 18, 2015

Atlantic City, New Jersey

I would like to thank the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management for holding this public meeting in Atlantic City. I believe it is very important that I, and all in New Jersey and the surrounding areas who are affected by this proposal, have an opportunity to express our concerns.

I strongly oppose any proposal that would authorize drilling off New Jersey's coast, including the current Bureau of Ocean Energy Management plan to conduct lease sales in the Mid-Atlantic planning region as included in the Proposed 2017 – 2022 Outer Continental Shelf Leasing Program and Draft Environmental Impact Statement. As a Member of the House of Representatives I have had many opportunities to make my opposition to drilling off New Jersey clear by consistently voting against legislation that would open further areas to drilling. In addition, for the past several Congresses, I have introduced legislation which would prohibit the Secretary of the Interior from issuing oil and gas leases on portions of the Outer Continental Shelf located off the coast of New Jersey.

Drilling in the Mid-Atlantic region puts at risk some of the nation's most sensitive coastal and marine resources. Bipartisan legislative and administrative actions have protected these sensitive coastal areas from offshore oil and gas exploration and drilling for decades. Efforts to issue new leases on the OCS have been met with bipartisan resistance. Comments and concerns voiced today at this public meeting further demonstrate substantial resistance to the draft proposal.

Protecting these areas means a great deal to New Jersey. Our tourism economy, a \$40 billion industry which supports more than 500,000 jobs, is heavily dependent on the cleanliness of our beaches and ocean environment. Additionally, our robust commercial and recreational fisheries, some of the largest in the nation, generate over a billion dollars in revenue. The potential environmental and aesthetic risks posed by offshore oil and gas development, especially for the relatively small amount of estimated recoverable oil and gas reserves off our and neighboring shores, could seriously imperil these vital contributions to the economy of New Jersey.

Opposition to the draft proposal should not come as a surprise given the near-unanimous reaction against ongoing attempts to conduct seismic testing off of Barnegat Bay, Long Beach Island and other parts of the Jersey Shore. I, along with my colleagues in Congress, local elected officials, recreational and commercial fishermen, local environmental groups including Clean Ocean Action, and concerned citizens strenuously object to the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration's authorization of Rutgers University - in collaboration with the National Science Foundation - to conduct a seismic survey 25-85 kilometers off of New Jersey's shore. Predictably, there is near-unanimous opposition to yet another assault on our coastline.

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Still recovering from the effects of Superstorm Sandy and wary of the devastating potential impact to my home state, I must again state my opposition to the current Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's plan to conduct lease sales in the Mid-Atlantic planning region as included in the Proposed 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Leasing Program and Draft Environmental Impact Statement. I ask the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to reconsider their plan to allow drilling in the Mid-Atlantic region.


Frank LoBiondo