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## Virginia Beach hoteliers oppose offshore drilling



The Virginia Beach Oceanfront, seen Saturday, July 5,

2014. (Rich-Joseph Facun | The Virginian-Pilot)

By [Aaron Applegate](#)  
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### VIRGINIA BEACH

Two more groups tied to the city's tourism industry, including the Virginia Beach Hotel Association, have come out against drilling for oil and gas off the Virginia coast.

"We had more questions than answers," said Jimmy Capps, owner of The Breakers Resort Inn, who chaired an association committee researching the issue. "We couldn't get answers we were comfortable with."

The city's Resort Advisory Commission, whose members are appointed by the City Council, also voted Thursday to oppose drilling.

"The general concern with the oil is it only takes one mistake, and it takes decades to get out from under that," Billy Almond, commission chairman, said before the meeting. "There's no guarantee. That is a situation that would really put us in jeopardy for many, many years."

The latest opposition could put more pressure on the City Council to review its stance on drilling. The council, at the request of former Gov. Bob McDonnell, voted five years ago to support it.

"I think the council should reconsider it," said Vice Mayor Louis Jones, who opposed drilling in the 2010 vote. "Whether or not council will reconsider it, I don't know. It's a major danger to our tourist industry."

Mayor Will Sessoms, who supports drilling, said he won't bring the issue back up for another vote. "But I'm only one of 11 people."

Earlier this year, the Obama administration announced a plan to allow drilling for oil and gas in federal waters in an undetermined area off Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia. The site would be at least 50 miles offshore, according to the proposal.

Leaders in many coastal communities, including the Outer Banks and Charleston, S.C., have opposed drilling.

The new positions from the hotel association and resort commission follow a similar decision in March by the Virginia Beach Restaurant Association.

Most of Virginia's political leaders have embraced drilling. Rep. Scott Rigell recently joined a trip led by the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce to gather information about it. The Chamber has argued that drilling would create jobs and diversify the region's economy.

Environmentalists oppose it.

"Now that Virginia Beach's tourism industry is united in their opposition, it is time for City Council to revisit their position," said Eileen Levandoski, assistant director of the Virginia Sierra Club. "Offshore drilling puts a thriving, proven tourism industry at risk of destruction for the false promise of dirty fossil fuel. Virginia Beach must weigh in and stand up to protect itself."

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