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May 3, 2022

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters, we urge you to oppose the poison pill “motion to instruct” offered by Senator Barrasso for H.R. 4521 to support more dirty and dangerous offshore drilling. H.R. 4521, referred to variously as USICA or the America COMPETES Act, is major legislation intended to promote scientific and technological innovation and competitiveness.

Senator Barrasso’s motion to instruct urges the conference committee for H.R. 4521 to include a provision in the final bill requiring immediate development of the next five-year offshore oil and gas leasing plan with a specific number of lease sales in certain regions, thus circumventing the careful and participatory statutory process in the law for the plan’s development. While the motion to instruct is non-binding, it is unconstructive and this direction is contradictory to the need to act on climate. Further, if enacted into law, it would tie the Biden administration’s hands and shut out public and state government involvement by forcing the five-year plan specifically to include a minimum of ten region-wide oil and gas lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico and Alaska regions of the outer continental shelf (OCS), two sales every year.

Further lease sales spell catastrophe for our climate and would lock in decades more of our reliance on polluting fossil fuels while providing no immediate relief to Americans on energy prices—all

while threatening coastal economies with toxic oil spills and increasingly severe climate disasters. **New leasing for dirty and dangerous offshore drilling simply will not lower current gas prices.** It would likely take at least five years or more for any new leases to begin producing. Big Oil is already sitting on over 8 million acres of unused offshore leases, which will themselves take years to begin producing. These companies are raking in record profits at the expense of the American people, and locking in decades of expanded offshore drilling offers no immediate relief to consumers, bears long-term climate change harms, and poses the unacceptable risk of toxic oil spilling into the ocean and washing up on our shores.

Russia's senseless war on Ukraine and the resulting fluctuations in oil and gas prices demonstrate the danger to our economy and national security of continued reliance on fossil fuels. If we are to meet the challenges of this century, we must protect our energy independence and our coastal economies by stopping the expansion of offshore drilling and increasing our domestic production of clean, renewable energy.

According to a 2022 Pew Research study, 69% of Americans support a transition to renewable energy. You have the power and the responsibility to move this nation forward to a clean, safe, prosperous, and energy-independent future.

Catastrophic oil spills like the 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon disaster present a huge risk to coastal businesses that depend upon a healthy ocean to survive. Our clean coast economy supports around 3.3 million American jobs and roughly \$253 billion in gross domestic product through activities like tourism, recreation, and fishing. Toxic oil poisons marine wildlife, causes beach closures, and shuts down lucrative fishing areas. Despite repeated promises that these oil spill disasters are rare, the oil and gas industry proves again and again that offshore drilling is dirty and dangerous. Where they drill, they spill, and no offshore oil and gas company can guarantee oil spills won't happen. The health and well-being of the citizens of the Gulf Coast should not continue to be sacrificed.

In light of the current domestic and international political climate, we urge you strongly to resist pressure from those who prioritize profit over people. We cannot wait any longer for decisive action on climate change, and ending new offshore drilling must be part of the solution.

We strongly recommend you VOTE NO on the Barrasso motion to instruct conferees for H.R. 4521.

Sincerely,

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Earth Action, Inc.
Earthjustice
Environment America
Environmental Integrity Project
Extinction Rebellion Austin
Friends of the Earth
Hands Across the Sand
Healthy Ocean Coalition
League of Conservation Voters
League of Conservation Voters – Chispa
Lynnhaven River NOW
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