Hispanic Access Foundation

Building Bridges, Changing Lives

Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (VAM-LD)
Ms. Kelly Hammerle
45600 Woodland Road
Sterling, VA 20166-9216

Subject: Opposition to the 11th National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program

Dear Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and Department of the Interior,

On behalf of the Hispanic Access Foundation, I respectfully submit this comment regarding the 11th National Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program. While we recognize the importance of thoughtful and responsible energy planning, we are concerned that the scope of this program may place avoidable risks on coastal communities, local economies, and ocean ecosystems.

Additional offshore oil and gas leasing is not essential to meeting current U.S. energy needs.[1] The United States is already producing oil at historically high levels, and recent legislation enacted by Congress already mandates a minimum number of offshore lease sales.[2] Expanding leasing beyond these requirements risks committing public waters to long-term development without clear benefits for taxpayers, energy reliability, or economic stability.

Experience demonstrates that offshore drilling carries inherent risks. Every oil spill begins with a lease sale, and even under normal operating conditions, offshore activities can affect water quality, air quality, and marine life. When spills occur, the impacts can be long-lasting, disrupting fisheries, tourism, and other coastal industries that depend on clean and healthy oceans.

The Gulf of Mexico provides a clear example. The BP Deepwater Horizon disaster remains the largest oil spill in U.S. history and resulted in more than $15 billion in cleanup costs and economic damages. Many Gulf communities, including Latinos, continue to face environmental and economic challenges years later, underscoring the importance of carefully weighing potential risks before expanding offshore leasing.

[1] Loomis, R. (2023, September 5). *U.S. oil demand will drop too fast to justify new offshore leasing*. Natural Resources Defense Council. https://www.nrdc.org/bio/rebecca-loomis/us-oil-demand-will-drop-too-fast-justify-new-offshore-leasing
[2] Bureau of Ocean Energy Management. (2025). *OBBBA oil and gas leasing program*. U.S. Department of the Interior. https://www.boem.gov/oil-gas-energy/national-program/obbba-oil-and-gas-leasing-program

Public health considerations are also central to this issue. Communities located near offshore oil and gas operations and related facilities are exposed to increased levels of air pollution, which have been linked to higher rates of respiratory illness, certain cancers, and other health concerns.[3] Reducing preventable health burdens and protecting community well-being should be shared priorities.

Latino voters have consistently expressed strong support for protecting coastal and ocean resources and refraining from offshore drilling. National polling[4] shows that **91% of Latino voters agree that clean beaches and a clean ocean are essential to the economy and quality of life**. Additionally, **72% of Latino voters support banning oil and gas drilling and replacing it with renewable energy sources such as solar and wind**, and **61% would support actions to ban offshore drilling for oil and gas even if it resulted in higher monthly costs for gasoline or household gas**. These views reflect a pragmatic desire to balance energy needs with long-term environmental and public health.

Offshore oil and gas development introduces the risk of spills that can threaten human health and safety, damage marine ecosystems, and disrupt local economies. Given the availability of cleaner and more resilient energy options, it is reasonable and responsible to approach expanded offshore leasing with caution.

For these reasons, the Hispanic Access Foundation encourages the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to reconsider the scope of the 11th National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program and to prioritize actions that protect coastal communities, promote public health, and support long-term economic stability.

Sincerely,

Hispanic Access Foundation

[3] Cleland, V. (2023, August 3). *Offshore drilling: A threat to public health & climate justice*. Natural Resources Defense Council. https://www.nrdc.org/bio/valerie-cleland/offshore-drilling-threat-public-health-climate-justice

[4] Barreto Segura Partners. (2024) National Azul Poll: Latinos and the Ocean. United States. BSP Research. Azul.org, 10 July 2024, Available at https://azul.org/en/single-media/