

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 25, 2018

The Honorable Walter Cruickshank  
Acting Director  
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management  
1849 C Street, NW.  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Acting Director Cruickshank:

We write to express our opposition to the Trump administration's recently announced plan to expand oil and gas drilling in U.S. waters. We join Rhode Island's Governor Gina Raimondo and Attorney General Peter Kilmartin in voicing our grave concerns over the harmful consequences such a decision will have on our environment and on our state's economy.

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's proposed 2019-2024 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) lease sale program would pose significant danger to New England's coastal waters, which are home to thousands of plant and animal species that rely on a well-balanced marine ecosystem. Expanding offshore drilling poses an unnecessary risk to this balance. Additionally, permitting oil and gas exploration off the coast of New England could have untold economic effects. Rhode Island's ocean economy generates more than \$2 billion annually. This includes more than \$1.4 billion from the travel and tourism industries, and nearly \$94 million from the commercial fishing industry. This is on top of the more than 41,000 jobs that are supported by Rhode Island's ocean economy. Throughout New England, ocean related industries generate more than \$17 billion annually, and support more than 240,000 jobs.

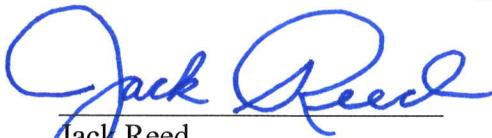
The administration's decision represents a sizeable giveaway to the oil and gas industries in a time when our nation should be making critical investments in renewable energy technologies, including wind and solar power. Rhode Island is leading the way in this regard as home to the nation's first offshore wind farm. Allowing new oil and gas exploration would be an enormous step backward in reducing our nation's dependence on fossil fuels.

Furthermore, we have significant concerns over the administration's decision to exempt Florida from its expansion plan. On January 9, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke announced that expanded drilling would not take place off the coasts of Florida due to the importance of its coastal industries. This arbitrary announcement, made outside normal administrative procedures, strongly suggests the administration failed to thoroughly consider the impact such a plan would have on coastal economies, and only admitted these mistakes when convenient to its political allies. To use the Secretary's own words when defending his decision to remove the Florida coastline from consideration, we would like to emphasize that Rhode Island is also "different," "unique," and "heavily reliant on tourism as an economic driver." Based on the Secretary's standard, Rhode Island should be given similar consideration as Florida and removed from consideration for new offshore oil and gas energy development.


As Rhode Island's elected representatives in Congress, we remain opposed to the administration's proposed plan to expand offshore oil and gas drilling in the strongest terms. We encourage continued investment and development of renewable technologies, and the continued preservation of our oceans.

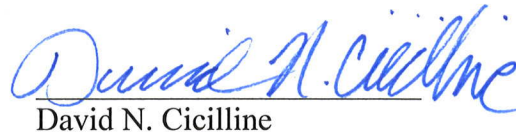
We thank you for your attention to this critical issue, and ask that the administration reconsider this misguided and dangerous proposal.

Sincerely,

  
Jack Reed  
United States Senator

  
Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator

  
James R. Langevin  
Member of Congress

  
David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress