

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 9, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
United States Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

We write in strong opposition to your agency's misuse of taxpayer funds and agency resources to issue a draft 2019-2024 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program in the middle of the current 2017-2022 Five-Year Plan. This draft proposal is an ill-advised effort to circumvent public and scientific input, and we object to sacrificing public trust, community safety, and economic security for the interests of the oil industry. We urge you to abandon this effort and maintain the protections outlined in the current 2017-2022 plan.

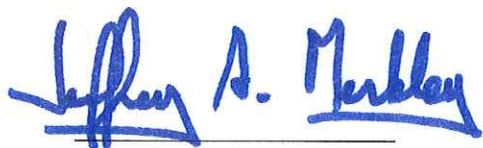
During your confirmation hearings, you pledged to incorporate local input into the management of our nation's public lands. Our constituents, scientific bodies, businesses, and local elected officials have already decidedly rejected efforts to expand offshore drilling that could compromise ecosystems, tourism and recreation, public safety, and marine industries. The governors of New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, California, Oregon, Washington, and the Attorney General of Rhode Island all are formally opposed to new leasing off their respective shores. Additionally, more than 150 municipalities on the East Coast, West Coast, and Gulf of Mexico have passed resolutions opposing offshore oil and gas drilling and exploration. The New England, Mid-Atlantic, and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, the Department of Defense, Air Force, and NASA have all weighed in expressing serious concerns or opposition to offshore exploration and drilling. More than 41,000 businesses and 500,000 fishing families have also expressed opposition to drilling in their communities.

The current 2017-2022 plan already allows leasing for more than 45 billion barrels of oil, and guarantees protections for vital resources in the Arctic, Pacific, and Atlantic. The nation's coasts are already bearing the consequences of climate change through rising sea levels, coastal erosion, and increased storm surges and flooding. We should not open all previously closed outer continental shelf areas to fossil fuel extraction and further endanger our climate, coastlines, communities, and economies. Especially in the harsh and fragile Arctic, where your agency has predicted a 75 percent chance of a major oil spill, proposing 19 new leases is the height of irresponsibility.

We are deeply troubled by your decision to open more than 90% of the outer continental shelf to fossil fuel development and needlessly put our coastal residents, businesses, oceans, and climate at grave risk. Offering 47 leases by expanding drilling into the Arctic, Pacific, Atlantic and Eastern Gulf of Mexico waters would lock us into decades of carbon pollution, and endanger future generations and livelihood simply for short-term gain of major oil companies.

We strongly object to this draft proposal, and urge you to maintain protection for the Arctic, Pacific, Atlantic and Eastern Gulf of Mexico and for our communities.

Sincerely,



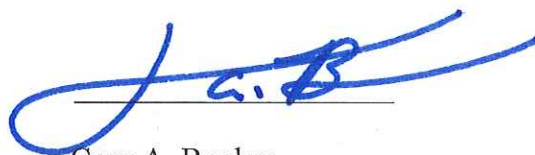
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United States Senator



Robert Menéndez
United States Senator



Bill Nelson
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



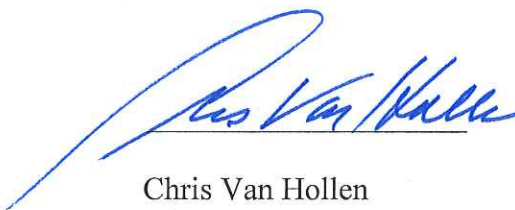
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United States Senator



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Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

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Patty Murray
United States Senator

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Dianne Feinstein
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Ron Wyden
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Richard Blumenthal
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Jack Reed
United States Senator

Patrick Leahy

Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

Dick Durbin

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth

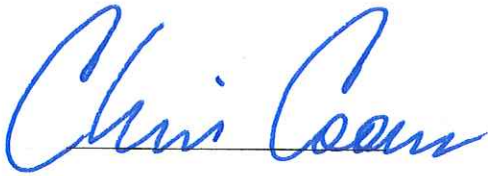
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Sherrod Brown

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Tom Carper

Thomas R. Carper
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Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



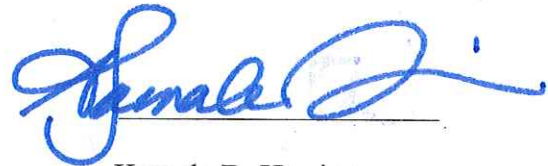
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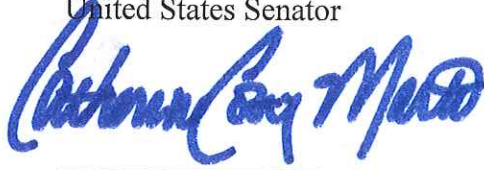
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United States Senator



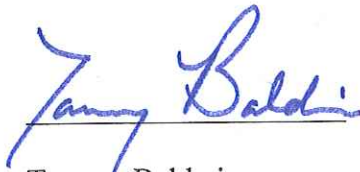
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



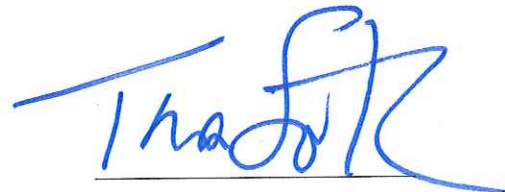
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Christopher S. Murphy
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Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



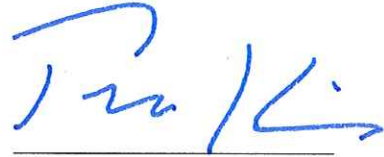
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Tim Kaine
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