

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 19, 2018

The Honorable James Mattis
Secretary of Defense
1300 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1300

Dear Secretary Mattis:

We write to share our concerns regarding the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's Draft Proposed Program to authorize drilling leases on the mid-Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf offshore of Virginia.

Though we have shared our views with BOEM and the Interior Department, we would also like to share with you some concerns related to the Department of Defense. In particular, we would like to inquire whether you have conducted a comprehensive study assessing the specific challenges the new 5-year plan may create for military activities in the Hampton Roads region and the Virginia offshore.

As you know, the Virginia coastal region of Hampton Roads has a deep national security footprint. It is home to the largest naval installation in the world at Naval Station Norfolk and more than a dozen other DOD installations across all service branches. Along with tourism and international port commerce, national security is a longstanding pillar of the regional economy.

We are concerned that allowing offshore drilling in this area would create new challenges for the region's DOD installations and the activities taking place on and around these waters. In late 2015, we were briefed by DOD on a new map that showed three types of areas impacted: 1) areas that definitively would conflict with military activities, 2) areas that could accommodate drilling with certain stipulations, and 3) areas that are all clear. According to that brief, the Virginia OCS has more acres that meet the first two categories than the third.

To further illustrate this point, we are enclosing a presentation from the former commanding officer of Naval Station Norfolk summarizing the complexities that offshore drilling rigs would create for military activities on the Virginia OCS. We would also note that Florida, a state with similar geography and a similar DOD footprint, was previously removed from the drilling lease schedule.

We have concern that drilling in the region would overall create unnecessary risks. We hope DOD will carefully scrutinize what allowing Virginia OCS drilling would mean for regional military assets.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Mark R. Warner
U.S. Senator



Tim Kaine
U.S. Senator