

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 19, 2016

The Honorable John F. Kerry  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Sally Jewell  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Kerry and Secretary Jewell:

We write to express our concern regarding Canada's decision to allow offshore oil drilling off the coast of Nova Scotia near the maritime boundary with the United States. Canada has issued a number of drilling leases to three companies – Shell, BP and Statoil – near U.S. waters. Drilling in these areas could affect the fisheries, environment, and coastal economies of the United States. Of particular concern are the sensitive and important marine protected areas and fishing grounds on Georges Bank, a highly productive area that straddles the maritime boundary between Canada and the United States.

The Interior Department's recently released 5-year offshore drilling plan protects the North Atlantic planning area, including the U.S. portion of Georges Bank, from offshore drilling. By allowing drilling off the Canadian coast, Canada's actions could undermine the steps you have already taken to protect the Atlantic Ocean from the harmful consequences of offshore oil and gas development.

The effects of oil spills can be widespread and devastating for our marine environments. The Gulf Coast Incident Management Team found that more than 1,100 miles of coastline were oiled during the BP spill. If a spill were to occur off of Nova Scotia, the repercussions would not be isolated to just a small area of Canadian coastline.

Shell, in particular, has already had significant safety lapses and drilling mishaps during exploratory drilling in Canadian waters. While conducting exploratory drilling activities at its Cheshire well last month, severe weather caused Shell's drilling riser pipe and lower marine riser package to disconnect from its drillship and crumple to the sea floor. Shell is the same company that suffered numerous safety lapses with its drill rigs and containment device during its attempts to drill offshore in the U.S. Arctic Ocean, eventually halting its Arctic efforts for the "foreseeable" future.

There is precedent for the United States to work with oil companies and foreign governments regarding offshore drilling activities near our maritime boundaries. The State Department and the Interior Department negotiated an agreement with Mexico to develop offshore oil resources in the Gulf of Mexico in 2012. Interior's Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) inspected Repsol's drilling vessel and equipment before the company began drilling in Cuban

waters in 2012. Repsol also provided information regarding its drilling plans and spill response capabilities to U.S. regulators prior to commencing drilling activities off of Cuba.

We urge you to similarly engage Canadian officials regarding any offshore drilling off the coast of Nova Scotia near the maritime border with the United States. We would prefer that Canada join the United States in halting all drilling efforts in the Atlantic at least through 2022. At a minimum, however, U.S. safety regulators should ensure that any drilling in Canada is performed with the highest levels of safety standards in place. We are concerned that if drilling continues and proper safeguards are not in place, an accident at one of these drilling locations could significantly harm our Atlantic fisheries and ocean environment.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

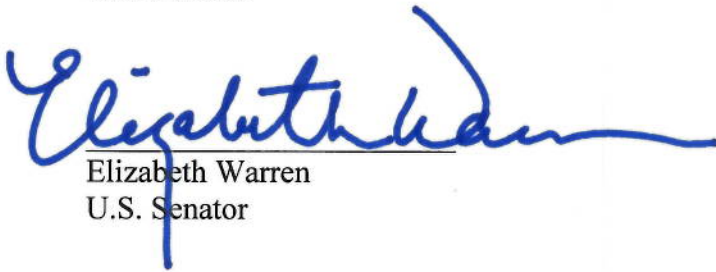
Sincerely,



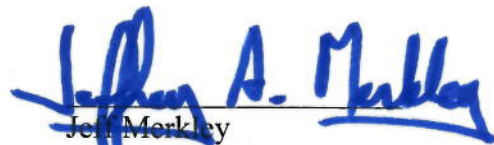
Edward J. Markey  
U.S. Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
U.S. Senator



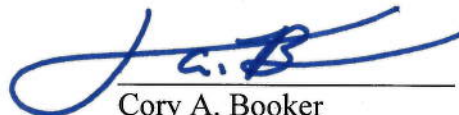
Elizabeth Warren  
U.S. Senator



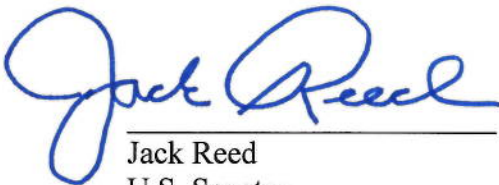
Jeff Merkley  
U.S. Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
U.S. Senator



Cory A. Booker  
U.S. Senator



Jack Reed  
U.S. Senator