

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 8, 2014

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

Dear Secretary Jewell,

As you begin the process for developing the five-year offshore oil and gas leasing program for 2017-2022, we write to urge you to continue to protect the East Coast from offshore oil and gas drilling. Fishing, tourism, recreation and other activities generate billions of dollars in revenue for our states each year. Offshore drilling in federal waters anywhere in the Atlantic would threaten these important economic drivers in our states as well as our coastlines, beaches and environment with the dangers of an offshore oil spill. Therefore, we urge you to continue the longstanding protections against offshore oil and gas drilling in federal waters off the Atlantic Coast in the Department's 2017-2022 Five Year Leasing Program.

The Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) requires the Department of the Interior to strike an appropriate balance between protecting our coastlines and the environment with offshore oil and gas development. Specifically, Section 18 of OCSLA states:

The Secretary shall select the timing and location of leasing, to the maximum extent practicable, so as to obtain a proper balance between the potential for environmental damage, the potential for the discovery of oil and gas, and the potential for adverse impact on the coastal zone.

The current Five Year Program makes more than 75 percent of the offshore oil and gas resources in federal waters available for development, while protecting our states along the East Coast from the dangers associated with offshore drilling. We believe this balance should not be further tilted toward offshore drilling in the Department's next Five Year Leasing Program and that the Interior Department should continue to protect important ecosystems off the East Coast such as Georges Bank off of New England from oil and gas drilling.

As we saw with the BP oil spill in the Gulf in 2010, oil spills offshore of one state can easily affect other states. Fishing off our states produces roughly \$1.75 billion in direct value for states along the East Coast and more than \$4 billion in total economic activity each year. Tourism in East Coast states generates hundreds of billions of dollars in additional economic activity and supports an estimated 800,000 jobs. These massive economic drivers in our states would be severely threatened by any oil and gas drilling activity in federal waters offshore in the Atlantic.

According to the Department of the Interior, the Gulf of Mexico holds the largest volumes of undiscovered technically recoverable oil and gas resources on the Outer Continental Shelf,

comprising more than half of all of our nation's offshore oil and gas resources. Yet, the oil and gas industry holds tens of millions of acres of offshore leases in the Gulf that have not yet been developed. In fact, the majority of federal lands offshore in the Gulf under lease have not yet been developed, according to the Interior Department. Given this, the Department should have no need to open to the Atlantic Coast to oil and gas leasing.

We therefore urge you to maintain the protections against offshore oil and gas drilling off the East Coast as you develop the Department's next Five Year Offshore Leasing Program.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



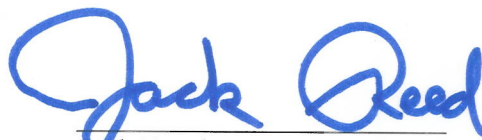
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



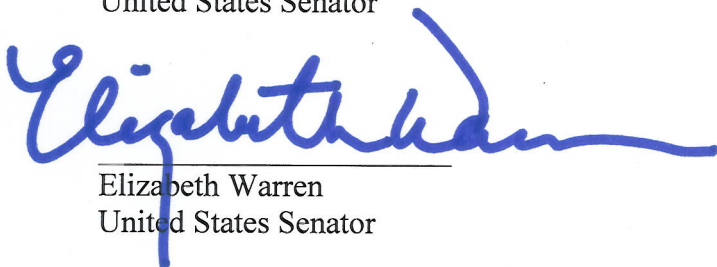
Jack Reed
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator