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June 8, 2016

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

Dear Secretary Jewell,

I commend you for your leadership in ensuring that the environment and economy of Massachusetts and other East Coast states will remain protected from offshore drilling by removing any oil and gas leasing in the Atlantic in the recently released Proposed 2017-2022 Oil and Gas Leasing Program. Allowing offshore oil and gas drilling anywhere in the Atlantic would threaten the fishing and tourism industries and environment in Massachusetts with the risk of a spill and I thank you for upholding the longstanding protections against oil and gas drilling in the Atlantic.

However, the Proposed Five-Year Plan continues to include lease sales offshore of Alaska in the Arctic Ocean. Drilling offshore in this remote, harsh and fragile environment has the potential to irreparably damage this ecosystem. I urge you to remove any lease sales in the Arctic Ocean from the Final Five-Year Drilling Program.

The attempts by the oil industry to drill offshore in the Arctic have already been riddled with safety lapses and mishaps. When Shell attempted to drill offshore in the Arctic in 2012, it suffered numerous safety issues with its spill containment device and its ships. Indeed, one of shell's drill rigs, the Kulluk, ran aground off the coast of Alaska while the company was rushing to tow it through a severe storm in what appears to have been a misguided attempt to avoid what they perceived could be additional financial liabilities. We cannot allow oil companies to continue to put profits above safety and the environment when it comes to drilling in such a harsh and remote environment.

Shell has now said it does not plan to drill offshore in the Arctic "for the foreseeable future." Indeed, Shell and the other oil companies that have held drilling leases in the Arctic Ocean have now released the bulk of their leases, indicated that there is a lack of industry interest in pursuing additional offshore drilling in the Arctic Ocean at this time. It does not make sense for the Interior Department to hold new lease sales in the Arctic at the same time that the oil industry is

relinquishing its current leases and is in the process of pulling back from any plans to drill offshore in this region.

As you finalize the 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program I urge you to remove the lease sales scheduled in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas in the Arctic Ocean in order to ensure that this fragile environment can be protected.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
U.S. Senator