

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 27, 2017

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

Dear Secretary Zinke:

We write to urge you not to revise the 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program (Five-Year Plan) to eliminate protections for the East and West Coasts and for the sensitive marine ecosystems in the Arctic Ocean. Keeping the protections from offshore drilling in place for the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic Oceans and the Eastern Gulf of Mexico in the Five-Year Plan is essential to protect key industries for our states, such as fishing and tourism, our environment and our climate.

The Five-Year Plan for offshore drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) that was finalized in November 2016 already makes available more than 45 billion barrels of oil for drilling. It makes available more than half of all known oil and natural gas resources on federal lands offshore. Extracting and burning even these fossil resources would already be disastrous for our climate. But when oil companies are currently holding and warehousing leases in the Gulf of Mexico that comprise an area nearly the size of Kentucky, we should first ensure that they are taking full advantage of the areas that are already available before contemplating opening any new areas to oil drilling and the threat of a spill. The existing Five-Year Plan includes protections for the East and West Coasts and the Arctic Ocean. We urge you to keep these protections in place.

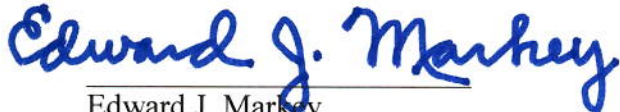
During your confirmation process, you said that you would seek to incorporate local input as you managed our nation's public lands. Allowing drilling anywhere on the East or West Coasts would threaten key economic drivers for these states such as fishing and tourism with the risk of an oil spill. For instance, fishing off East Coast states produces roughly \$1.75 billion in direct value for these states and more than \$4 billion in total economic activity each year. Tourism on the East Coast generates hundreds of billions of dollars in additional economic activity and supports an estimated 800,000 jobs. Offshore oil spills don't respect state boundaries and a spill off the coast of one state could easily affect another.

In the harsh and fragile ecosystem of the Arctic Ocean, the oil industry has had numerous safety lapses and mishaps during efforts to drill offshore. Oil companies have now relinquished the bulk of leases held in the Arctic Ocean, demonstrating a lack of industry interest in drilling in this area.

We urge you to keep the current five-year offshore drilling plan in place and not revise the program to remove protections against drilling off the East and West Coasts and in the Arctic Ocean. Keeping these protections against offshore drilling in place is essential for vital industries in our states and to ensure that we protect our beaches and our climate.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,




Edward J. Markey
U.S. Senator



Robert Menendez
U.S. Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
U.S. Senator



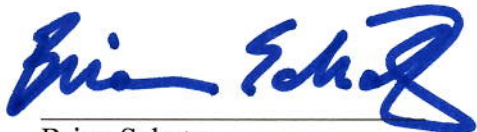
Cory A. Booker
U.S. Senator



Richard Blumenthal
U.S. Senator



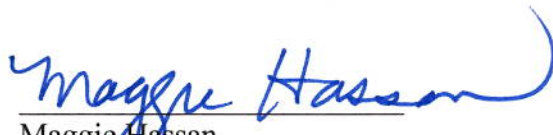
Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator



Brian Schatz
U.S. Senator



Bernard Sanders
U.S. Senator



Maggie Hassan
U.S. Senator



Patty Murray
U.S. Senator



Thomas R. Carper
U.S. Senator



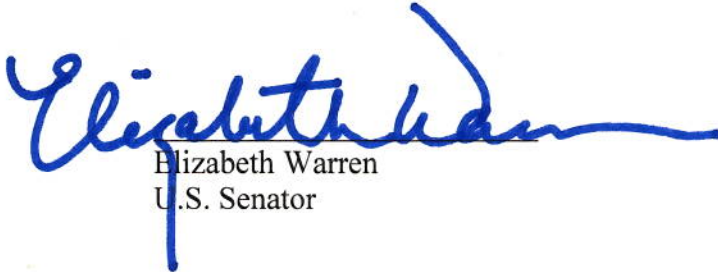
Maria Cantwell
U.S. Senator



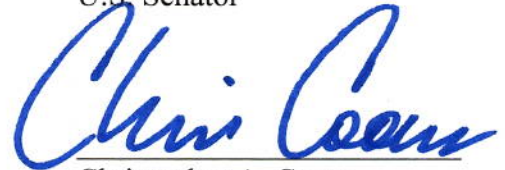
Al Franken
U.S. Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
U.S. Senator



Elizabeth Warren
U.S. Senator



Christopher A. Coons
U.S. Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
U.S. Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Senator



Bill Nelson
U.S. Senator



Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator



Richard J. Durbin
U.S. Senator



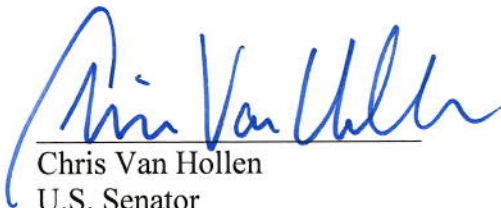
Jeffrey A. Merkley
U.S. Senator



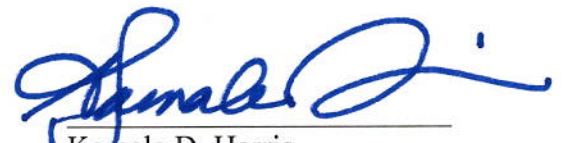
Jack Reed
U.S. Senator



Gary Peters
U.S. Senator



Chris Van Hollen
U.S. Senator



Kamala D. Harris
U.S. Senator