

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 07, 2014

Dr. Walter Cruickshank
Acting Director
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
1849 C Street, NW
Washington DC 20240

Dear Dr. Cruickshank:

We are writing in response to the initial Request for Information on the preparation of the 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program (Five-Year Program). As members of Congress with an interest in the health and economic vitality of the Atlantic Ocean, we would like to specifically request that all planning areas in the Atlantic be excluded from the 2017-2022 Five-Year Leasing Program.

Under the current 2012-2017 Five-Year Program the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) determined that lease sales in the Atlantic would not be appropriate due to the lack of infrastructure to support oil and gas exploration and development, as well as spill preparedness and response. Complex issues relating to potentially conflicting uses, including those of the Department of Defense, were also factors in making the determination under the current Five-Year Program.

We believe that the circumstances that informed the exclusion of Atlantic planning areas under the existing Five-Year Program remain unchanged. Additionally, significant federal, state, and local resources have been expended in an effort to improve the health of Atlantic fisheries, protect endangered and threatened species that rely on the Atlantic Ocean and coast, and ensure the continued economic vitality of coastal areas through recreation and tourism. We believe that allowing oil and gas development in the Atlantic would be inconsistent with and contrary to these ongoing efforts.

We are not opposed to offshore energy development in the Atlantic when that development is done carefully, sustainably, and protects critical coastal and marine environments and industries. We commend BOEM for its effort to lease and permit offshore wind energy projects along the Atlantic seaboard. The development of wind energy resources in the Atlantic will support jobs, generate revenues, and provide much needed clean, sustainable energy without threatening existing jobs and economic activity that would be endangered by oil and gas activities in the Atlantic. Advances in tidal and marine hydrokinetic power may similarly provide opportunities to harvest the energy potential of our oceans without subjecting our coasts and the marine environment to the threats associated with offshore oil and gas production.

Furthermore, climate change and ocean acidification have already begun to stress the Atlantic environment and ecosystem. Sea level rise and extreme weather events, exacerbated by warmer air and ocean temperatures, already threaten coastal communities. The massive destruction caused by Hurricane Sandy emphasized these risks and demonstrated the fragility of our coasts. We appreciate the work that BOEM has done to help our communities rebuild, but are concerned that these rebuilding efforts could be severely undermined by offshore oil and gas leasing. The Atlantic Ocean and the individuals that depend on this area, whether for their livelihoods or as recreational users, should not also be forced to contend with the threats of a major oil spill, or for that matter the widespread industrial development that would be necessary for developing an oil and gas industry in the Atlantic.

While states bordering the North Atlantic Planning Area are united in their opposition to offshore oil and gas drilling, we understand that elsewhere in the Atlantic there is likely to be interest in proceeding with oil and gas exploration and development. We believe that an analysis of drilling in the Atlantic should be holistic: ocean currents and marine species do not recognize artificially drawn planning boundaries, and the consideration of any individual Atlantic planning area should also include an analysis of the potential effects on neighboring planning areas and throughout the entire ocean ecosystem.

We appreciate the efforts of the Department of the Interior to improve the safety and oversight of offshore drilling, but we are simply unwilling to accept the tremendous risks of an oil spill in the Atlantic, which would vastly outweigh any potential gains from drilling. We again thank you for excluding Atlantic leasing from the 2012-2017 program and ask that you consider our strong opposition to future leasing in the Atlantic through all stages of development of the 2017-2022 Five-Year Program.

Sincerely,



RUSH HOLT
Member of Congress



DAVID PRICE
Member of Congress



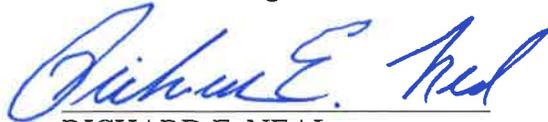
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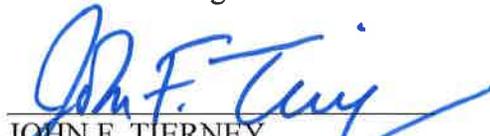

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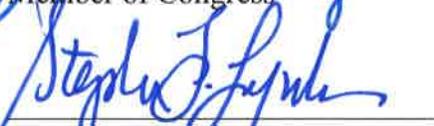

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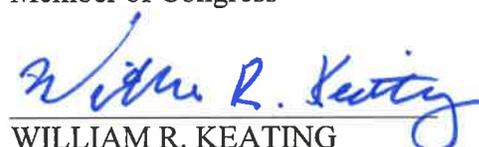

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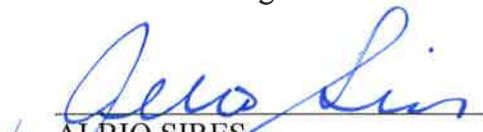

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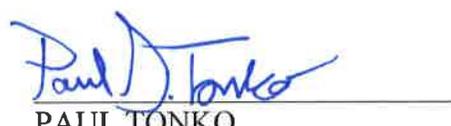

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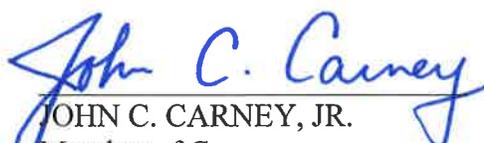

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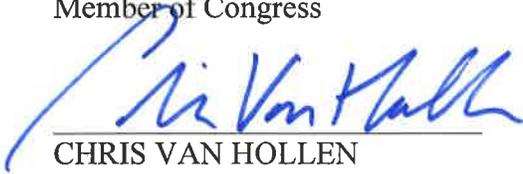
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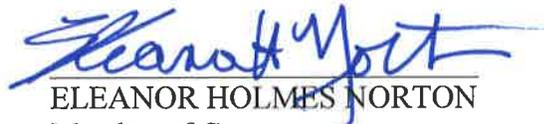
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