

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3005

June 27, 2022

The Honorable Deborah Haaland
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C St., NW – 6156
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

We write to you today regarding the recent announcement that the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) within the Department of the Interior (DOI) is developing a new five-year outer continental shelf (OCS) oil and gas leasing program, with a proposed program expected by June 30, 2022. We urge you to protect our coastal communities, economies, ecosystems, and climate by including no new leasing across all planning areas in any proposed or final five-year OCS oil and gas leasing program.

As Senators representing coastal states, we know that offshore drilling is inherently a risk-reward proposition, with our coastal communities shouldering the risk and oil companies reaping the rewards. History shows us that it is not a question of *if* an oil spill occurs, but *when*. Coastal economies that rely on our pristine waters support 3.3 million jobs and \$257 billion in GDP,¹ and offshore drilling puts these jobs and the families and communities who depend on them at risk.

We recognize that families across the country are struggling as Russia's unjust and brutal war in Ukraine has led to increased gasoline prices and rising inflation. As the U.S. and our partners around the world appropriately work to limit Russia's ability to bring oil to market in order to finance its aggression, we need to do everything we can to minimize impacts here at home. Yet, oil companies are taking advantage of the crisis to rake in record profits while gouging consumers at the pump.² To help alleviate costs, Democrats support and have offered numerous proposals to directly help American families afford gasoline and food.

Increasing offshore leases will do nothing to lower current gas prices, as the average offshore lease takes about five years to develop. One recent analysis found that a five year plan that included no new leasing would have no impact on domestic oil production through 2027 and

¹ https://usa.oceana.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/final_climate_economy_fact_sheet_m1_doi.pdf

² <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/these-top-5-oil-companies-just-raked-in-35-billion-while-americans-pay-more-at-the-pump/>

only negligible impacts through 2035, and similarly that such a scenario would have no impact on oil and gasoline prices through 2030 and only negligible impacts through 2035.³ Additionally, a report issued in November 2021 by the Department of the Interior under your leadership found that 55 percent of existing offshore leases were not currently producing, “indicating a sufficient inventory of leased acreage to sustain development for years to come.”⁴

In addition to failing to alleviate the strain on current gas prices, new offshore oil and gas leasing will make it more difficult to meet our climate goals and worsen the climate crisis. A recent study found that protecting our coasts from new fossil fuel development would avoid over 19 billion tons of greenhouse gas emissions, roughly equivalent to taking every car in the nation off the road for 15 years, and prevent over \$730 billion in damages to people, property, and the environment.⁵ If we are to meet the Paris climate agreement’s goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius and avoid the worst impacts of climate change, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that global greenhouse gas emissions must peak by 2025 before declining precipitously and achieving net-zero emissions by the early 2050s.⁶ Rather than locking in additional emissions for years to come, BOEM and DOI must signal the United States’ commitment to reducing our emissions and combating climate change.

Opposition to offshore drilling is not a partisan issue. Governors of both parties up and down our coasts, joined by a diverse coalition of residents, stakeholders, municipalities, organizations, and elected officials from all levels of government, have come together to declare that our shores are not for sale to Big Oil. President Biden recognized the threat that offshore drilling poses to our coasts, economy, and climate, and he campaigned on a promise of ending offshore drilling.⁷

We urge you to uphold the President’s promise, and include no new lease sales in the next five-year OCS oil and gas leasing program, and appreciate your attention to this important matter. We look forward to your response no later than July 11, 2022.

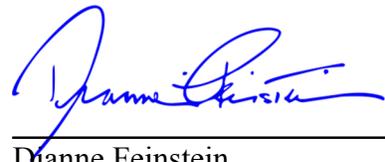
Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

³ <https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/case-against-new-offshore-oil-gas-leasing-ocs-ib.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/report-on-the-federal-oil-and-gas-leasing-program-doi-eo-14008.pdf>

⁵ https://usa.oceana.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/final_climate_economy_fact_sheet_m1_doi.pdf

⁶ https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6wg3/pdf/IPCC_AR6_WGIII_FinalDraft_FullReport.pdf

⁷ <https://usa.oceana.org/climate-and-energy-end-new-offshore-oil-drilling-protect-our-climate-future/>



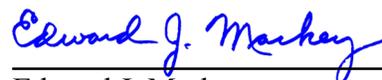
Jack Reed
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable Tommy Beaudreau, Deputy Secretary of the Interior
Laura Daniel-Davis, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Land
and Minerals Management
Amanda Lefton, Director, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
The Honorable Gina McCarthy, National Climate Advisor
Ali Zaidi, Deputy National Climate Advisor
The Honorable Brenda Mallory, Chair, Council on Environmental Quality
Sara Gonzalez-Rothi, Senior Director for Water, Council on Environmental
Quality