

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 2, 2014

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Last week, the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management (BOEM) announced the first steps in the development of the 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program, calling for a Request for Information and a 45-day public comment period. As your Administration begins work on this plan, we write to strongly oppose any efforts to expand offshore oil and gas drilling, particularly any such efforts that would threaten New Jersey's vibrant coastal communities.

As we learned all too clearly in the wake of the Deepwater Horizon tragedy, offshore drilling poses a substantial risk of economic and environmental devastation for our shoreline communities. Even today, more than four years after the BP oil spill, 60 percent of the 210 million gallons that spilled are unaccounted for, and oil-soaked sand and tar balls continue to wash up on the beaches of the Gulf<sup>1</sup>. This is not an isolated example—20 years after the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill off the coast of Alaska, 21,000 gallons of crude lingered in the areas where the spill occurred, and species including herring and pigeon guillemots are still not yet recovered. In the event of an oil spill that hit New Jersey's coast, the damage would be both enormously costly and likely permanent.

In addition to the long-term impacts of these spills, they also have the ability to damage a broad geographic area. They do not respect state boundaries, and drilling anywhere along the Atlantic Coast poses a significant risk for all eastern seaboard states. As the coastal economies of four states were damaged by the BP oil spill, it is likely that any oil spill in the Atlantic would threaten states up and down the coast.

The economic consequences of an oil spill near the New Jersey coastline would be catastrophic. In 2011, New Jersey's tourism industry generated \$38 billion, and \$4.4 billion in state and local taxes and \$4.8 billion in federal taxes. The industry directly supports 312,000 jobs in New Jersey and 486,000 jobs including indirect and induced impacts—a total of 9.8% of the state's workforce<sup>2</sup>. Also critical to the state's economic health is our fishing industry. In 2011, New Jersey's seafood industry supported 43,000 jobs, and the state has one of the largest saltwater

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nationaljournal.com/energy/four-years-after-deepwater-horizon-spill-tar-balls-continue-to-wash-up-on-shore-20140613>)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.njtia.org/tourism\\_numbers.php](http://www.njtia.org/tourism_numbers.php)

recreational fishing industries in the nation<sup>3</sup>. The strength of New Jersey's workforce depends strongly on having a thriving coastal economy.

In addition to the economic concerns, offshore oil drilling threatens permanent and devastating degradation to our environment and natural resources. The Jersey Shore is a priceless natural treasure, providing recreation to generations of families and supporting a thriving ecosystem of marine mammals and sea life. New Jersey's 130 miles of coastline house a diverse array of marine life, and provide critical habitat to several federally endangered and threatened species of fish, birds and turtles. We owe it to future generations to ensure that our pristine natural resources are preserved and protected from the polluting fossil fuel industry.

Following the unprecedented devastation of Hurricane Sandy, we are still working every day to rebuild our homes, our businesses, and our way of life. It is critical that we focus on long-term efforts to improve resiliency and to limit the carbon pollution that can drive extreme and unpredictable weather. Recovering from a natural disaster of this magnitude is challenging, and New Jersey is committed to rebuilding and coming back stronger than ever. Yet, allowing for offshore oil and gas drilling poses the threat of a manmade disaster that our communities and environment cannot afford.

New Jersey's coast has faced manmade disaster before. When medical waste washed up on our beaches in 1988, New Jersey saw a 22% decline in tourism and estimated lost revenues of over \$1 billion<sup>4</sup>. This type of environmental contamination is significantly easier to clean up and remediate than an oil spill, and we fear that any spill would be even more catastrophic for our environment and vital industries.

With the major oil companies continuing to rake in sky-high profits on the backs of consumers, supported by costly subsidies from the American taxpayer, there is simply no need to take further steps to line their pockets. While increasing offshore oil and gas drilling is a clear victory for Big Oil, it's a losing proposition for New Jersey's economy, our environment, and our way of life.

We are not opposed to harnessing energy from the Atlantic OCS; however, energy development off the Atlantic coast should be focused on expanding renewable energy production, particularly offshore wind. Last month your Administration announced a significant federal grant for Fishermen's Energy, a proposed wind farm off the coast of Atlantic City, New Jersey, and we applaud that commitment. These are the type of investments that the federal government should be making as our country works to reduce our carbon output and transition to a cleaner energy economy.

As your administration begins preparation of the 2017-2022 OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program, we request that you take full accounting of these costs. We believe strongly that the potential for significant and lasting hardship to New Jersey's workforce, our coastal resources, and our communities far outweighs any benefits that the already-profitable oil companies would receive

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/Assets/economics/documents/feus/2011/FEUS%202011-Revised.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [http://swfsc.noaa.gov/publications/TM/SWFSC/NOAA-TM-NMFS-SWFSC-154\\_P811.PDF](http://swfsc.noaa.gov/publications/TM/SWFSC/NOAA-TM-NMFS-SWFSC-154_P811.PDF)

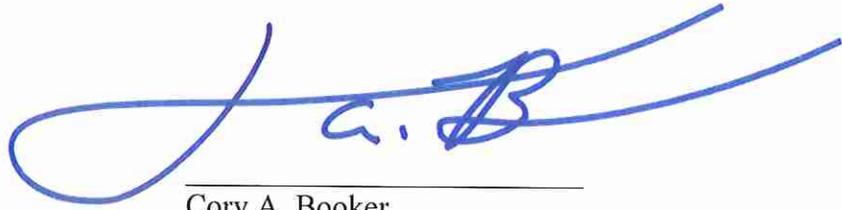
with expanded drilling opportunities. Given these concerns, we oppose the inclusion of any and all of the Atlantic planning areas in the draft plan.

Thank you for your consideration of this vital request, and we look forward to working closely with you and your Administration to chart a clean and bright energy future for the nation.

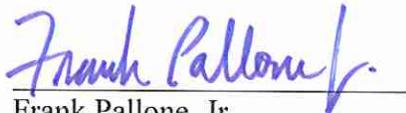
Sincerely,



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Cc:

The Honorable Sally Jewell  
Secretary of the Interior  
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