

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 5, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
United States Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

We write in strong opposition to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's Draft Proposed Program for a 2019-2024 Outer Continental Shelf Leasing Program, which threatens to open up the entirety of the Atlantic Ocean to offshore oil and gas drilling. This proposal shows a complete disregard for New Jersey's economy, environment, and quality of life, and should be immediately rejected.

Five years after the devastation of Hurricane Sandy, New Jerseyans continue to work every day to rebuild our neighborhoods, our economy, and our way of life. Central to that effort are our thriving shore communities—from the nearly 10 percent of our state's workforce employed due to the tourism sector, to the 50,000 men and women who work in the state's seafood industry, to the home- and business-owners who have built their lives and their livelihoods along the water. An unspoiled coastline is vital to what makes New Jersey a great place to live, work, and visit.

Gambling with New Jersey's economy is a needless risk whose only beneficiaries are big oil companies. Fueled by billions of dollars of tax subsidies, these companies are already making annual profits the likes of which the people on the Jersey Shore won't see in a lifetime. Mortgaging our state's economic future in order to further pad these companies' bottom lines is unconscionable.

The proposal is made even more troubling when viewed through the wider lens of the Administration's effort to roll back established offshore drilling safety standards. After the BP disaster, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement promulgated its well control rule, which updated requirements for offshore drilling equipment in an attempt to prevent another catastrophic oil spill. As part of Executive Order number 13795, President Trump called for these common sense safeguards to be revisited. The White House's attempts to undermine even the modest safety protections established after the Deepwater Horizon tragedy show a willful refusal to learn from the mistakes of the past, and a complete disregard for the future of our coastal economies.

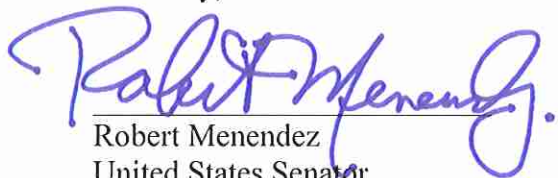
Opening up hundreds of miles of coastline to offshore drilling while eliminating even minimal safety precautions means that another oil spill is not a possibility—it is a certainty. While

loosely-regulated oil rigs up and down the coast may be a dream come true for Big Oil, it's a nightmare scenario for our shore communities.


In questions for the record submitted to the Senate prior to your confirmation as Secretary, you stated that one of your highest priorities would be "Restoring trust by working with rather than against local communities and states" and that you commit "to working closely with Congress, the States, local governments and stakeholders to develop a comprehensive policy towards OCS leasing." We urge you to keep your promise, and listen to the voices of New Jerseyans and people up and down the Atlantic Coast who are asking you to reject oil and gas drilling along our shores.

Our oceans are priceless natural resources that should be preserved for future generations, not monetized and auctioned off for the benefit of a few. The Draft Proposed Program for the 2019-2024 Outer Continental Shelf Leasing Program is antithetical to this principle, and should be immediately rejected.

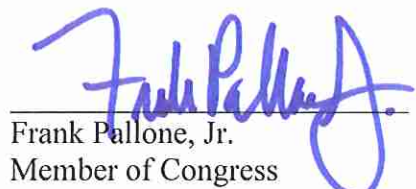
Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress