

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

September 21, 2020

President Donald J. Trump  
The White House  
Office of the President  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write today regarding your recent issuance of a Presidential Memorandum to the Secretary of the Interior extending a moratorium on offshore oil and gas drilling off the coasts of Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina until at least 2032. We are deeply concerned that a similar moratorium on offshore oil and gas drilling has not been extended to the Commonwealth of Virginia, despite requests from Virginia Governor Ralph Northam, members of Virginia's Congressional Delegation, and Virginia's coastal communities.

In 2018, your administration released the 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program, which would have opened more than 90 percent of the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) to oil and gas leasing including the coast of Virginia.<sup>[1]</sup> Republican and Democratic governors along the Atlantic seaboard have indicated their opposition to this proposed plan. In addition, over 285 localities on the East Coast and Florida's Gulf Coast, 2,300 elected officials, 46,000 businesses, and 500,000 fishing families along the East Coast have expressed their opposition to offshore oil and gas drilling.<sup>[2]</sup>

In Virginia, more than 20 communities have officially voiced their opposition to offshore drilling, including the Commonwealth's most populous cities, Virginia Beach and Norfolk. In addition, Virginia's General Assembly passed a law earlier this year that would prohibit oil and gas drilling and related infrastructure in Virginia waters.

Offshore oil and gas drilling threatens the Commonwealth's economy, natural resources, and military assets. Virginia's coastal communities rely predominantly on industries that would be affected by your proposal including tourism, recreation, commercial fishing, aquaculture, and deepwater port commerce. Further, the Department of Defense's analysis has shown that oil and gas leasing off the coast of Virginia could potentially disrupt military operations, training, and testing activities critical to the U.S. military's readiness and our national security.<sup>[3]</sup>

For these reasons and more, Virginians are overwhelmingly opposed to your administration's proposal to expand offshore drilling off the Atlantic Coast. Virginia has been as vocal in its

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<sup>[1]</sup> BOEM, "2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program," January 2018.

<https://www.boem.gov/sites/default/files/oil-and-gas-energy-program/Leasing/Five-Year-Program/2019-2024/DPP/NP-Draft-Proposed-Program-2019-2024.pdf>

<sup>[2]</sup> OCEANA, "Grassroots Opposition to Offshore Drilling and Exploration in the Atlantic Ocean and off Florida's Gulf Coast,"

<https://usa.oceana.org/climate-and-energy/grassroots-opposition-offshore-drilling-and-exploration-atlantic-ocean-and>

<sup>[3]</sup> DOD, "DoD Mission Compatibility Planning Assessment: BOEM 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program," October 30, 2015, <https://usa.oceana.org/sites/default/files/662/2017-2022-dod-ocs-report.pdf>

opposition to opening up its offshore area to oil and gas drilling as Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. Yet, Virginia has not received the same promises as these states. Your September 8, 2020, Presidential Memorandum, and accompanying remarks in Jupiter, FL, provided zero reasons for extending the moratorium for three states while excluding every other affected state.

Throughout this process, your Administration has emphasized the consideration and importance of the “local and state voice.”<sup>[4]</sup> Therefore, we respectfully urge you to take the concerns from Virginia coastal communities just as seriously as those in Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



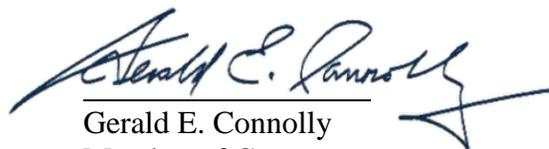
Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator

/s/ Tim Kaine

Tim Kaine  
United States Senator

/s/ Robert C. “Bobby” Scott

Robert C. “Bobby” Scott  
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress

/s/ Donald S. Beyer Jr.

Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



A. Donald McEachin  
Member of Congress



Elaine G. Luria  
Member of Congress

/s/ Abigail D. Spanberger

Abigail D. Spanberger  
Member of Congress



Jennifer Wexton  
Member of Congress

<sup>[4]</sup> NPR, “Interior Secretary Zinke: Florida Offshore Oil Drilling Is ‘Off The Table,’” January 9, 2018, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/01/09/576938087/interior-secretary-zinke-florida-offshore-oil-drilling-is-off-the-table>