

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

July 15, 2026

Geoffrey Wikel
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
Office of Strategic Resources
45600 Woodland Road,
Sterling, Virginia, 20166

Dear Mr. Wikel:

We write in regard to the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's (BOEM) recent publication of a Request for Information and Interest (RFI) entitled "Commercial Leasing for Outer Continental Shelf Minerals Offshore the Commonwealth of Virginia." This RFI opened a 30-day public comment period that is scheduled to conclude on July 23, 2026. We respectfully request that BOEM extend this public comment period by no less than 30 days in order to provide interested Virginia stakeholders with the opportunity to review the RFI and provide informed feedback on the proposed lease area.

Notice of the comment period was published in the Federal Register on June 23, 2026, and BOEM provided for a 30-day comment period. We are deeply concerned that the current comment period timeline is insufficient for Virginians to consider and prepare adequate comments in response to the RFI. BOEM solicited information on 18 wide-ranging topics, including geological conditions, archaeological resources, environmental sensitivity, impacts on Tribes and traditional cultural properties, fiscal terms for leasing, and technological feasibility of mining activities. It will take a considerable amount of time for interested stakeholders to review relevant materials and provide meaningful comments.

Notably, this is the first time that BOEM has considered conducting a competitive lease sale for marine minerals in the Atlantic Ocean. A 30-day extension, at minimum, of the comment period is further warranted due to the novel nature of the RFI, the size of the RFI area (over 2,700 square miles), and the complexity of the information sought by BOEM. An extension of the comment period is essential to ensure meaningful participation from the state, local, and Tribal governments of Virginia, other ocean users and industries, and the public.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can provide additional information or assistance.

Sincerely,



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



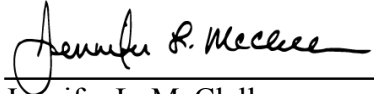
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



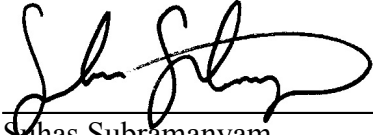
Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



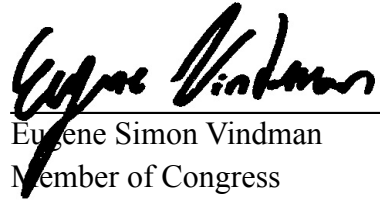
Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress



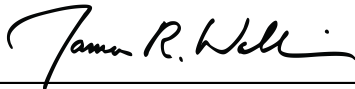
Jennifer L. McClellan
Member of Congress



Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Eugene Simon Vindman
Member of Congress



James R. Walkinshaw
Member of Congress