

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

July 2, 2020

The Honorable David Bernhardt  
Secretary of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

**Re: Interior Department's Continued Attempts to Expand Oil and Gas Drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf Off California**

Dear Secretary Bernhardt:

We are concerned over reports that the administration is continuing to pursue plans to expand new oil and gas leasing off the Pacific coast of the United States. As Members of Congress from the California Delegation, we write in strong opposition to any new oil and gas leasing off the Pacific coast. We urge you to continue to follow the 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program (Program), ensuring that no new oil and gas leasing takes place off the coast of California.

In April 2019, shortly after, the Department of the Interior announced that it would reevaluate the pathway moving forward. The Trump administration's unnecessary 2019-2024 OCS Oil and Gas Program, released in January 2018, opened more than 90 percent of the country's coasts to oil and gas leasing, including the entire Atlantic, Pacific, and Arctic coasts, as well as the Eastern Gulf of Mexico after the current Congressionally mandated moratorium ends in 2022.

A Politico article entitled, *Interior to Push Drilling in Florida Waters After November Election*, published June 10, 2020, reported that President Trump and the Department of the Interior are continuing to work toward expanding offshore oil and gas leasing into the Eastern Gulf off Florida's West Coast and possibly other areas originally sought in the administration's 2018 Program. The article stated that "The Trump administration is preparing to open the door to oil and gas drilling off Florida's coast — but will wait until after the November election to avoid [election] blowback..." While the article could not confirm nor deny that the Department of the Interior was continuing to pursue OCS leasing off California, the State's inclusion into the 2018 program, as well as statements from current and former administration officials, is evidence of the Trump administration's interest in opening up federal waters off California's coast and remains a cause for concern.

The 1969 oil spill off the coast of Santa Barbara, California, brought the deaths of thousands of marine mammals, fish, and birds with oil washing up on the beaches for hundreds of miles along Central and Southern California. Further, 2020 marks only 10 years since BP's Deepwater Horizon oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. There is a reason why every single coastal governor along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, both Republican and Democrat, stand opposed to offshore drilling, as the inevitable spills and the variety of other onshore and offshore impacts from oil

and gas drilling have no place along our coasts. It is critically important for coastal communities whose livelihoods are built around fishing, tourism, and recreation that there is no risk of oil leaks or spills that could negatively impact these ocean dependent economies and fragile marine ecosystems.

We continue to stand opposed to any new expanded oil and gas leasing in the Pacific. We request answers to the following questions from the Department of the Interior in response to this letter:

Is the Department still developing, or planning to release, a new Program that will allow for new oil and gas leasing on the OCS inconsistent with the 2017-2022 Five-Year Offshore Oil and Gas Leasing Program? If this is the case, does it contain new lease sales for areas in the Pacific off California's coast?

We request a response answering these questions by Friday, July 31, 2020.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Alan Lowenthal (CA-47)  
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman (CA-2)  
Member of Congress



Mike Levin (CA-49)  
Member of Congress



Salud Carbajal (CA-24)  
Member of Congress



John Garamendi (CA-3)  
Member of Congress



Doris O. Matsui (CA-6)  
Member of Congress



Ami Bera (CA-7)  
Member of Congress



Jerry McNerney (CA-9)  
Member of Congress



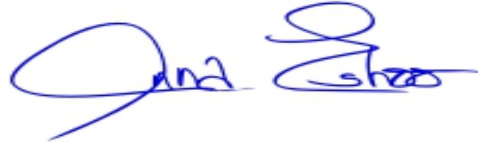
Mark DeSaulnier (CA-11)  
Member of Congress



Jackie Speier (CA-14)  
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna (CA-17)  
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo (CA-18)  
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren (CA-19)  
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta (CA-20)  
Member of Congress



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Judy Chu (CA-27)  
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Adam B. Schiff (CA-28)  
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Member of Congress



Ted W. Lieu (CA-33)  
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Jimmy Gomez (CA-34)  
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Karen Bass (CA-37)  
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Linda T. Sánchez (CA-38)  
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Maxine Waters (CA-43)  
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Nanette Diaz Barragán (CA-44)  
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Katie Porter (CA-45)  
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Harley Rouda (CA-48)  
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Scott Peters (CA-52)  
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Susan A. Davis (CA-53)  
Member of Congress