

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 29, 2016

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

As the co-chairs of the Atlantic Offshore Energy Caucus, we represent a diverse group of members unified around opening the Atlantic for offshore energy exploration. While the Department of the Interior concludes the planning period for the 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Proposed Program, we wanted to remind you of the continued support that exists for Atlantic lease sale 260 and ask that you retain the full area included in the Draft Proposed Program (DPP) without further limitations.

According to the EIA, Gulf of Mexico production is estimated to increase to record high levels in 2017. This increase in production is a result of the leasing decisions made a decade or more ago. Knowing that oil and natural gas will be needed for many more decades to come, DOI should not prematurely close the door on future leasing and exploration of the Atlantic OCS. Decisions made today matter.

We are joined by our colleagues in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia in supporting future access to the oil and natural gas resources off our states' coasts in the mid- and south-Atlantic. We ask that you take into consideration the support of the many stakeholders in our states including our Congressional delegations, our Governors, state and local leaders and the citizens of our states. We ask that you not close the door on the potential for thousands of new jobs, enhanced national security and much needed new government revenue by removing the Atlantic in the Proposed Plan or further limit the one proposed lease sale included in the Draft Proposed Program.

Members of our caucus have written to the Department regarding their support on several occasions. On April 23, 2015, a diverse group of 163 members from the Senate and House of Representatives wrote expressing our views on the Department's draft proposed plan. This letter highlighted our support for opening new areas for exploration, including the Atlantic OCS.

On March 27, 2015, more than 30 members of the House of Representatives wrote the Department regarding their specific support for Atlantic lease sale 260. Additionally, on August 1, 2014, during the Department's Request for Information comment period for the draft proposed plan, 164 members of Congress wrote to the Department encouraging them to establish a rigorous lease sale schedule in the Gulf of Mexico and open new areas for development. All of these letters, which are enclosed here, were signed by a broad group of members of Congress reflecting different constituencies that recognize the benefit offshore oil and gas exploration would have on our communities and our nation's goal of becoming energy secure.

Clearly, members of the House of Representatives and the Senate have demonstrated their strong support for opening the Atlantic OCS for energy exploration and this support remains today. We continue to urge you to retain the entire proposed Atlantic lease sale 260 area without further restriction, and open these areas for future oil and gas leasing, exploration, and production.

Sincerely,



Richard Hudson
Member of Congress



Jeff Duncan
Member of Congress



Scott Rigell
Member of Congress

Enclosure:

Letter dated April 23, 2015
Letter dated March 27, 2015
Letter dated August 1, 2014