Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 23, 2015

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW, Room 7229
Washington, DC 20240-0002

Dear Secretary Jewell:

We are writing to express our views on the recently released Draft Proposed 2017-2022 Five Year Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Leasing Program (DPP). Specifically, we have concerns over the premature restrictions placed on the proposed lease sale areas in the Atlantic, including the 50-mile buffer zone for the entirety of the Atlantic proposed areas, the permanent withdrawal of areas offshore Alaska and the limited opportunities available under the program as proposed. As this process moves forward, we urge you to retain the entire Atlantic lease sale 260 area without additional restrictions in these planning areas for future oil and natural gas leasing, exploration and production. We also strongly encourage the Administration to make additional areas of the OCS available for leasing and to increase the amount of lease sales from the historic low number proposed in the draft plan.

As Members of Congress committed to a strong, comprehensive domestic energy strategy, we wholeheartedly believe that the United States must not shrink away from developing our nation's offshore energy resources. A robust Five Year OCS Program should be a key component of the Administration's all-of-the-above energy strategy that can continue to advance the job creation, economic growth and energy security gains that the U.S. has enjoyed thanks to the recent boom in energy production on state and private lands. Given that offshore developments have high costs and exceptionally long development timelines, the Five Year program sets the foundation for more than a decade of development. As such, we fear that the currently proposed DPP sets the stage for energy insecurity instead of domestic prosperity.

While we were pleased to see the Administration finally take a step in the right direction by including one potential lease sale in the Atlantic in the draft plan, this step was offset by the additional restrictions in the Atlantic and area withdrawals in the offshore of Alaska. What the administration proposed appears merely to be an effort to provide political cover irrespective of the opportunity foregone. When coupled with the imposed buffer zones, and an insufficient number of lease sales, none of which are required to be held, this draft proposal fails to produce a long-term energy policy that harnesses the potential of our nation's vast natural resources. In this respect it is disingenuous.

During your March 5, 2015 testimony before the House Natural Resources Committee you admitted that you cannot guarantee that the Atlantic would have a single lease sale in the final DPP. Considering that the Department of the Interior (DOI) is not mandated to actually hold any lease sale made available in a DPP, it seems shortsighted and irresponsible to limit at this early stage in the process the proposed lease sales to a number that doesn't even meet President Jimmy Carter's low threshold nearly 40 years ago.

This Administration's insistence on keeping more than 85 percent of our OCS off-limits to domestic energy development has been counterproductive to efforts to boost our nation's economy. Our struggling economy is on the verge of a transformational manufacturing renaissance and is capable of producing the resources needed to make it a reality. The federal budget needs new revenues, and U.S. energy security, which is finally on the brink of breaking OPEC's stranglehold, could be realized if not for these unnecessary bureaucratic barriers. Considering the significant and uncontrollable geopolitical forces that continue to impact our energy security, this Administration can no longer afford to ignore our abundant offshore resources.

There is strong bipartisan support from Members of Congress, governors, state legislators, local leaders and the general public for allowing oil and natural gas development in more areas of the U.S. OCS. States that have not directly seen the economic prosperity that accompanies offshore development are anxious to reap the benefits from the indirect investment in technologies and manufacturing that facilitate such work. We strongly believe that the Department should move forward from the DPP with a 2017-2022 Proposed Program that sets a more aggressive schedule of sales in currently open areas and also allows for the exploration of new areas, such as the Atlantic and the offshore in Alaska. These areas are significant for future resource development, without subjective and potentially damaging area withdrawals, omissions and exclusions. The 2017-2022 OCS Five Year Program must represent a significant departure from the existing moratorium on the vast majority of the U.S. OCS and embrace America's offshore energy program as a serious contributor to the nation's standing as an energy superpower.

Rather than just indulge our engagement in the development stages of the 2017-2022 OCS Five Year Program planning process, we ask that you actually work with Congress on this important proposal. We are at a critical time in developing America's energy policy, and decisions we make today will have an impact on future U.S. oil and natural gas production. Such decisions will also significantly impact our standing in a volatile global economy. It is important that the administration is forward-thinking in America's energy development planning and we are eager to work with the administration to ensure we are headed down the path to prosperity and security through increased offshore American energy production.

Sincerely,

Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

Rob Bishop
Member of Congress

Tim Scott
United States Senator

Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress

Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator

Garret Graves
Member of Congress

John Barrasso, M.D.
United States Senator

Mike Lee
United States Senator

James Inhofe
United States Senator

John Cornyn
United States Senator

Rob Portman
United States Senator

Roger Wicker
United States Senator

Deb Fischer
United States Senator

Cory Gardner
United States Senator

Orrin Hatch
United States Senator

David Perdue
United States Senator

Johnny Isakson
United States Senator

Michael Enzi
United States Senator

Thom Tillis
United States Senator

Thad Cochran
United States Senator

Jeff Sessions
United States Senator

James Risch
United States Senator

Shelley Capito
United States Senator

Steve Daines
United States Senator

John Thune
United States Senator

David Vitter
United States Senator

Dan Sullivan
United States Senator

Ted Cruz
United States Senator

Tom Cotton
United States Senator

Richard Burr
United States Senator

Bill Flores

Richard Hudson

Ann Wagner

Mike Rogers

Dan Kildee

Patrick McHenry

Gregg Harper

Bill Posey

Chris Stewart

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Chuck Fleischmann

R Hunter

J Rudy Yoder

Pete Olson

Ed Whitfield

Adrian Smith

Lorrie Lehmert

Michael R Turner

Steve Chabot

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Joe Wilson

Jeb Hensarling

Jim Sensenbrenner IL-15

CC W Dent

John J Duncan Jr

John Carter

Joe Barton

John Culberson

Lynn Westmoreland

Steve King

Marsha Blackburn

Dan Burton

Sam Johnson

Kenny Marchant

Don Young

Bill Shuster

John Mica

Rick W. Allen

Glenn Thompson

Tom Marino

Ted Poe

Dr. Zike

Scott Quinteros

Ryan Costello

Shaun Pearce

Cresent Hardy

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Brett Guthrie

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Trent Franks

John Kline

James Sensenbrenner J. WI-05

Tim Murphy

Tom Graves

Ed Jones

Todd Rokita

Billy Long

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Pete King

Mark Hawhouse

Alex X Mooney

Mac Thornberry

Duncan Hunter

Rob Wittman

Sam Cole