

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

February 21, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary, U. S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

We write to express our strong opposition to the Department of the Interior's inclusion of the Atlantic region in the National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program for 2019-2024. The health, abundant fish and wildlife, and clean water of the Atlantic Ocean and Long Island Sound are a part of Connecticut's rich heritage and are vital to our states' social and economic wellbeing. Opening waters off the coast of Connecticut to drilling puts jobs, coastal communities, and our environment at risk, and is antithetical to Connecticut's efforts to transition to a sustainable, clean energy future.

Connecticut's economy relies heavily on the Atlantic Ocean for sustainable seafood, jobs, and recreation. In 2016, New England's coastline generated 4.8 million jobs and \$726.8 billion in economic output that would be jeopardized by this program.¹ Specifically, Connecticut's seafood industry alone has accounted for nearly 3,000 jobs in recent years.²

While Connecticut may not be the first state that comes to mind when considering offshore drilling, opening the region up to offshore drilling is dirty, dangerous, and destructive. It would not only threaten the health of the Atlantic Ocean and its fragile marine environments, but also the livelihoods of small businesses and commercial fishermen that depend on a clean ocean. Given that oil spills don't recognize state boundaries, any spill would be detrimental to the entire region—this risk is simply unacceptable.

As we have seen in the case of BP's Deepwater Horizon in 2010 when an oil rig exploded in the Gulf of Mexico, lives were lost, and the ecological and economic consequences continue to this day, while few have been held accountable and adequate safety reforms have yet to be put in place. An oil spill disaster of this magnitude in the Atlantic Ocean could coat 1,300 miles of coastline—this is equivalent to impacting communities all the way from Savannah, Georgia to Boston, Massachusetts³.

¹ "Coastal Economy Data." National Oceans Economic Program. Accessed February 9, 2018. <http://oceanoeconomics.org/Market/coastal/coastalEcon.asp>.

² Curtis, Rita, and Sabrina Lovell. *Fisheries Economics of the U.S.* Silver Spring, MD: NOAA, 2015. Accessed February 9, 2018. https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/Assets/economics/publications/FEUS/FEUS-2015/Report-Chapters/FEUS%202015%2006-NewEngland_Final3_508.pdf.

³ Chase, Alison, and Alexandra Adams. "America's Atlantic Ocean Economy—Too Important to Jeopardize." National Resources Defense Council. Last modified January 18, 2018. Accessed February 9, 2018. <https://www.nrdc.org/resources/americas-atlantic-ocean-economy-too-important-jeopardize>.

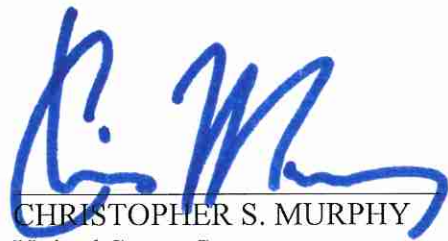
This giveaway to the fossil fuel industry makes 90 percent of the U.S. outer continental shelf available to drilling, and would open the Atlantic region to its first offshore oil and gas lease in 30 years. This move is in direct contrast with Connecticut's efforts to establish a clean energy future, and would create a binding relationship and reliance on unsustainable fossil fuel development for generations to come. We believe that we should focus on investing in clean, renewable energy that will protect and preserve our nation's natural resources, including our oceans, and the communities that rely on them.

The Atlantic Ocean is a precious public resource that is critical to Connecticut's well-being and should belong to every American, rather than special interests. As such, we urge you to remove the Atlantic region from the National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program for 2019-2024. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.


Sincerely,



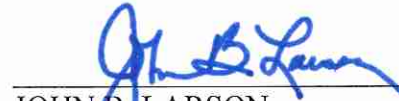
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate



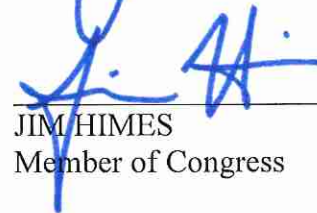
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