## United States Senate WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 9, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke Secretary United States Department of the Interior 1849 C Street NW Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

We write in strong opposition to your agency's misuse of taxpayer funds and agency resources to issue a draft 2019-2024 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program in the middle of the current 2017-2022 Five-Year Plan. This draft proposal is an ill-advised effort to circumvent public and scientific input, and we object to sacrificing public trust, community safety, and economic security for the interests of the oil industry. We urge you to abandon this effort and maintain the protections outlined in the current 2017-2022 plan.

During your confirmation hearings, you pledged to incorporate local input into the management of our nation's public lands. Our constituents, scientific bodies, businesses, and local elected officials have already decidedly rejected efforts to expand offshore drilling that could compromise ecosystems, tourism and recreation, public safety, and marine industries. The governors of New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, California, Oregon, Washington, and the Attorney General of Rhode Island all are formally opposed to new leasing off their respective shores. Additionally, more than 150 municipalities on the East Coast, West Coast, and Gulf of Mexico have passed resolutions opposing offshore oil and gas drilling and exploration. The New England, Mid-Atlantic, and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, the Department of Defense, Air Force, and NASA have all weighed in expressing serious concerns or opposition to offshore exploration and drilling. More than 41,000 businesses and 500,000 fishing families have also expressed opposition to drilling in their communities.

The current 2017-2022 plan already allows leasing for more than 45 billion barrels of oil, and guarantees protections for vital resources in the Arctic, Pacific, and Atlantic. The nation's coasts are already bearing the consequences of climate change through rising sea levels, coastal erosion, and increased storm surges and flooding. We should not open all previously closed outer continental shelf areas to fossil fuel extraction and further endanger our climate, coastlines, communities, and economies. Especially in the harsh and fragile Arctic, where your agency has predicted a 75 percent chance of a major oil spill, proposing 19 new leases is the height of irresponsibility.

We are deeply troubled by your decision to open more than 90% of the outer continental shelf to fossil fuel development and needlessly put our coastal residents, businesses, oceans, and climate at grave risk. Offering 47 leases by expanding drilling into the Arctic, Pacific, Atlantic and Eastern Gulf of Mexico waters would lock us into decades of carbon pollution, and endanger future generations and livelihood simply for short-term gain of major oil companies.

We strongly object to this draft proposal, and urge you to maintain protection for the Arctic, Pacific, Atlantic and Eastern Gulf of Mexico and for our communities.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey A. Merkley United States Senator

Bill Nelson

Bill Nelson United States Senator

Edward

Edward J. Markey United States Senator

Brian Schatz United States Senator

Robert Menendez United States Senator

Cory A. Booker United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse United States Senator

Chris Van Hollen United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand

Kirsten Gillibrand United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein United States Senator

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Richard Blumenthal United States Senator

Jack Reed United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin United States Senator



Sherrod Brown United States Senator

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Patty Murray United States Senator

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Mazie K. Hirono United States Senator

Patrick Leahy United States Senator

Tammy Uyburt

Tammy Duckworth United States Senator

Thomas R. Carper United States Senator

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Charles E. Schumer United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin United States Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto United States Senator

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Bernard Sanders United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin United States Senator

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Margaret Wood Hassan United States Senator

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Elizabeth Warren United States Senator

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Maria Cantwell United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy United States Senator

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Robert P. Casey Jr. United States Senator

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Debbie Stabenow United States Senator

Tim Kaine United States Senator