

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1804

July 31, 2014

The Honorable Sally Jewell  
Secretary  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

As Senators committed to a comprehensive domestic energy strategy, we are pleased that the Department of the Interior has begun its preparation of the new Five Year Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program for 2017-2022 with the recent release of the Request for Information and ask that the Department proceed with a broad plan. This Program occurs at a critical time as our nation continues to advance as an energy superpower. A robust Five Year OCS Program is a key component of the administration's all-of-the-above energy strategy and will continue to advance the U.S. economy and our energy security.

The U.S. energy renaissance is radically changing our energy picture and advancements in technology have reversed our nation's energy paradigm from one of scarcity to abundance. As noted in the President's May 2014 all-of-the-above energy strategy, increased oil and natural gas production is a boost to the U.S. economy and is a significant contributor to American job creation, the shrinking trade deficit and increased government revenues. Our energy picture must have a long-term view and in addition to the growth in onshore development that vision must include a robust offshore leasing and development plan.

As such, we ask that the Department keep the 2017-2022 Five Year Program very broad and include areas that the administration and industry are on record as indicating will provide new information and data to help inform decisions. We believe the Department should move forward with a Five Year Program that continues to lease currently open areas but also allows for the consideration of exploration for all areas with reasonable potential for future resource development. We know from experience in the Gulf of Mexico that these unexplored areas very likely hold much more potential than outdated resource estimates suggest. As you have testified several times before Congress, it will be important to keep the Program broad so that new information can be gathered and informed decisions can be made.

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. Areas that have not seen the direct benefits of offshore development are anxious to reap them. Offshore energy production must play a key role as we continue down the path as an energy superpower creating more American jobs, providing much-needed federal and local government revenue, and enhancing our nation's energy security.

Robust offshore energy development should also provide equitable distribution of revenues to states supporting that production, especially those who currently do not benefit from revenue sharing and royalty payments, which will allow for much needed coastal protection and resiliency efforts and for necessary related infrastructure investments. These investments, are vital to the continued productivity of the Federal OCS, as it is the states along the coast who house the workers, the resupply ports and the pipeline networks needed to produce this energy, whether traditional or renewable, and move it to market. With over \$7 billion sent each year to the Federal treasury and billions more expected, it is both fair and forward thinking to use a portion of these revenues to support the coastal states who host this energy production for our country.

As you consider areas to include in the 2017-2022 Draft Proposed Program, we note that the administration and the Department of the Interior have made considerable changes to the structure and regulations that govern offshore energy development to enhance safety. The industry has also stepped up with the development of best practices and technologies focused on the areas of spill prevention, containment, and recovery. We are confident that these changes will allow offshore exploration and development to proceed in an environmentally responsible way.

We appreciate the opportunity to engage in the early stages of the 2017-2022 OCS Five Year Program planning process and look forward to working with you on this important proposal. We are at a critical time in developing our energy policy, and decisions we make today will have an impact on future U.S. oil and natural gas production. We feel that it is important that we are forward thinking in our energy development planning and that we do not prohibited via regulation the future development of potential energy assets. We hope the Administration will take steps to continue to grow the U.S. into an energy superpower not only for the next decade, but for decades to come.

Sincerely,

Mary L. Landier

Paul Manchillo

Mark R. Werner

Paul Bepler