

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 4, 2007

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush,

We are writing to draw your attention to serious problems in the Five-Year Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program released on Monday by the Minerals Management Service (MMS) and to urge that you order the portion of the Program concerning oil and gas drilling off the coast of Virginia be removed.

As you know, a Congressional moratorium and a Presidential withdrawal order currently prevent any oil and gas drilling activities along the entire Atlantic seaboard. MMS' new Program inappropriately assumes that the moratorium and withdrawal will both be lifted prior to 2012, despite the fact that these policies have protected our coasts for twenty-five years. Assuming that such major federal policies will suddenly and dramatically change is a violation of the spirit, if not the letter, of the statutory requirements imposed by the Congressional moratorium.

Moreover, we are extremely disappointed that MMS glibly ignored New Jersey's concerns that it could be impacted by drilling activities off the coast of Virginia. In January 2006, MMS drew arbitrary seaward boundaries, making New Jersey no longer adjacent to the planning area in which the proposed drilling envisioned in the Program would take place. Ignoring the concerns of a potentially impacted state based on lines drawn on paper overlooks the very basic fact that the ocean -- and potential environmental impacts from oil and gas development -- knows no boundaries.

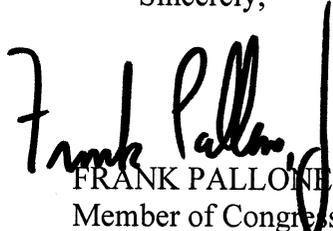
Tourism is an incredibly valuable economic engine for our state, and much of that industry is dependent on clean beaches and oceans. MMS' plan prepares for an activity which puts that engine at risk, yet the agency ignored the proposal's potential impacts on New Jersey's environment. This behavior is especially disappointing given that MMS itself estimates that the amount of technically recoverable oil in the entire Mid-Atlantic Planning Area would last only between 17 to 41 days, and the amount of technically recoverable gas would last only three months. To put our beaches, our fishing, and our tourism economy at risk for such minimal resources is short-sighted and unacceptable.

In releasing this Program, the Minerals Management Service has ignored our serious concerns and the will of Congress. We urge that you direct Interior Secretary Kempthorne to remove the portion of the Program relating to drilling off the coast of Virginia before he signs the final document.

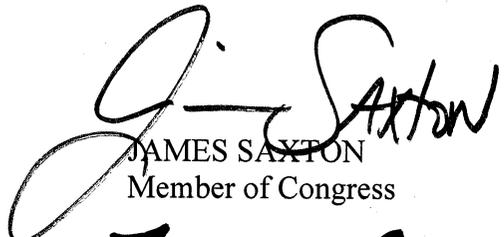
Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,


ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator


FRANK PALLONE, JR.
Member of Congress


FRANK LAUTENBERG
United States Senator


JAMES SAXTON
Member of Congress


ROBERT ANDREWS
Member of Congress


FRANK LOBIONDO
Member of Congress


CHRISTOPHER SMITH
Member of Congress


MICHAEL FERGUSON
Member of Congress


RODNEY FRELINGHUYSEN
Member of Congress


BILL PASCRELL, JR.
Member of Congress


RUSH HOLT
Member of Congress


STEVEN ROTHMAN
Member of Congress