

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

January 24, 2018

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

Dear Secretary Zinke:

In light of Bureau of Ocean Energy Management Acting Director Walter Cruickshank's recent statement before the House Natural Resources Committee that the Planning Areas off Florida's coasts are still under consideration for offshore drilling, we write to reiterate our strong opposition to any attempt to open up the eastern Gulf of Mexico to oil and gas drilling. This area has been off-limits under law since 2006 and must remain protected. It is critical to our national security interests as well as the tourism-driven economy of Florida.

In the years since the Deepwater Horizon explosion in 2010, local governments, businesses, and stakeholders across the state have spoken out in opposition to drilling off Florida's West Coast. Floridians understand that drilling puts more than just our coastal environment at risk: it exposes Florida's economy to devastating losses in the tourism revenues upon which the entire state relies.

The eastern Gulf of Mexico hosts the Eastern Gulf Test and Training Range, a unique and invaluable resource that is critical to our military readiness. Pilots training on F-22 and F-35 fighters need the open space available only in the Joint Gulf Range Complex. We object to any efforts to open the eastern Gulf of Mexico to drilling, and we urge you to remove this area from the five-year plan immediately.

Florida also has vital assets on the Atlantic Coast that would be similarly threatened by offshore drilling activities. The waters off of Kennedy Space Center and Patrick Air Force Base are the site of testing for the first stages of satellite and rocket launches. At the Jacksonville Naval Air Station, the military trains for anti-submarine warfare. To be clear, drilling activities are incompatible with the military missions in these areas and therefore do not serve the nation's best interests.

Please include this letter in the public record for the 2019-2024 Draft Proposed Program. Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Sincerely,



Bill Nelson  
United States Senator



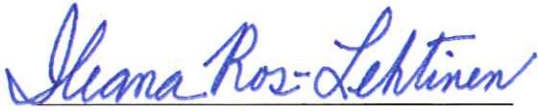
Marco Rubio  
United States Senator



Stephanie Murphy  
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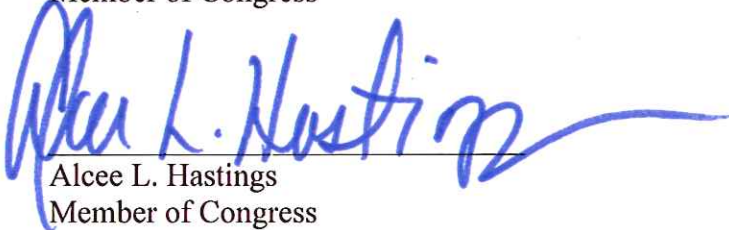
Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress



Ileana Ros-Lehtinen  
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Kathy Castor  
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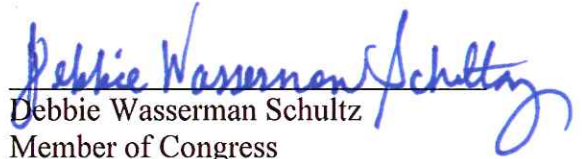
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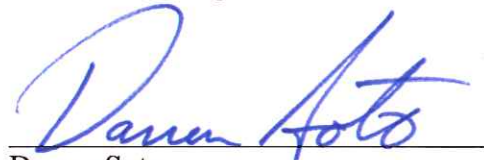
Val Butler Demings  
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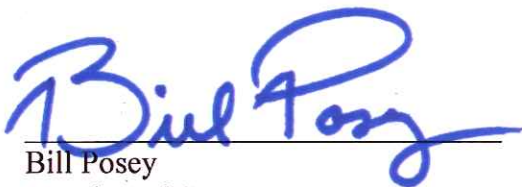
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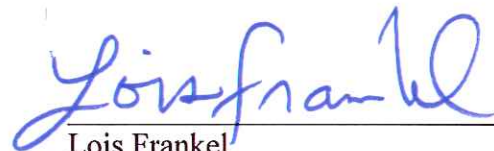
Bill Posey  
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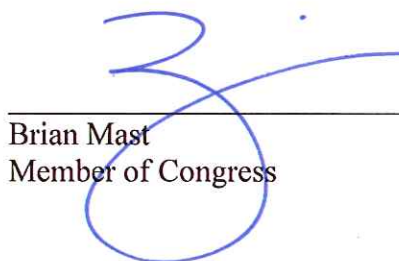
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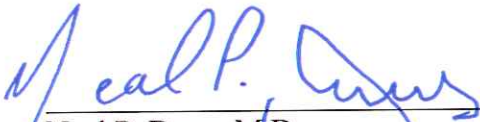
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Member of Congress




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Neal P. Dunn, M.D.  
Member of Congress



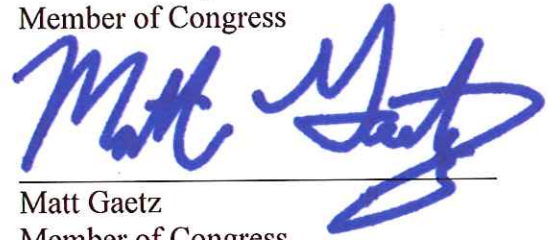
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Member of Congress



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Francis Rooney  
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Matt Gaetz  
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