

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 9, 2018

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

Dear Secretary Zinke,

We are writing to convey our strong opposition to any attempts by the U.S. Department of the Interior to weaken critical oil drilling safety rules adopted in the wake of the Deepwater Horizon tragedy. As Floridians know all too well, an oil spill can devastate a regional economy and inflict long-term environmental damage.

That is why we are asking you to reject any proposals to roll back regulations that were specifically adopted to address systemic safety failures that led to the 2010 Deepwater Horizon spill. Recently, a division of your agency, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE) stated some of the regulations adopted since the spill created “potentially unduly burdensome requirements” on oil and gas operators.

In 2010, the Deepwater Horizon spill spewed more than 4 million barrels of oil into the Gulf of Mexico, claimed the lives of 11 workers, decimated the region’s iconic wildlife and severely damaged our fishing and tourism industries.

It would be a huge mistake to weaken these safety regulations and risk not only lives, but catastrophic consequences to our environment. Florida’s coastal communities depend on a clean and healthy ocean and we should not jeopardize the state’s economy or environment by gambling on operations that lack adequate safeguards.

As you are undoubtedly aware, BSEE adopted these regulations over the course of several years and after significant input and engagement with the public, federal policy makers, and industry stakeholders in order to enhance the safety of offshore oil and gas drilling.

Some of the most noteworthy and egregious proposals under consideration would:

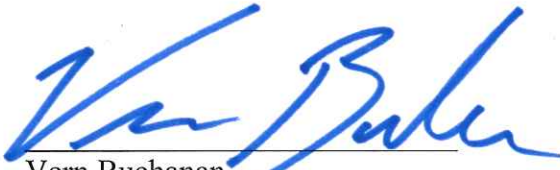
- Reverse a rule that called for more frequent testing of blowout preventers – the same device that failed in the Deepwater Horizon spill, which is intended to serve as a fail-safe against explosions in undersea oil and gas wells.

- No longer require independent auditors to certify that safety and pollution prevention equipment works under extreme conditions. This would remove any federal requirement and instead allow industry to adopt their own set of standards, the guideline industry utilized prior to the Deepwater Horizon spill.

- Scrap the requirement that an investigation into equipment failure be completed within 120 days. This would enable oil companies to delay indefinitely with no required date of completion.
- Remove the federal government's authority to regulate maximum or minimum drilling pressures at new sites. This important provision maintains a safe pressure for drilling that prevents surges and potential blowouts similar to what occurred in the Deepwater Horizon spill.

Our constituents, which were severely impacted by the Deepwater Horizon spill, vehemently oppose any effort to weaken these common sense regulations, and increase the likelihood of another oil spill off the coast of Florida. We urge you to reject these ill-advised proposals. Thank you for your time and consideration, and we look forward to your prompt response on this critically important matter.

Sincerely,



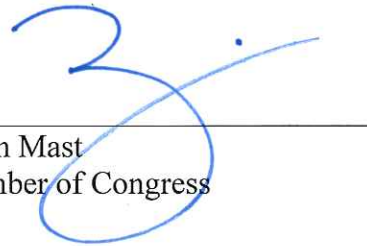
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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



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Brian Mast
Member of Congress



Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress



Ted Deutch
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Bill Posey
Member of Congress



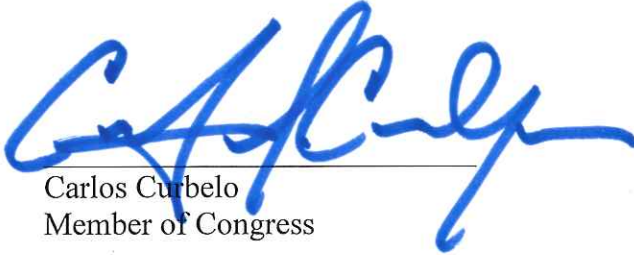
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Kathy Castor
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Gus Bilirakis
Member of Congress



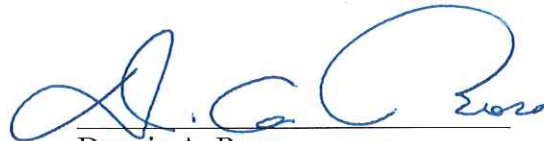
Carlos Curbelo
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Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



Al Lawson
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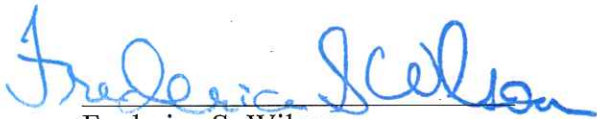
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