

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 30, 2019

Honorable David Bernhardt  
Secretary  
United States Department of the Interior  
1849 C St. NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Bernhardt:

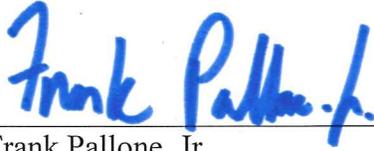
We write regarding reports that the Department of Interior intends to stall plans to expand dangerous offshore oil exploration in the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans in light of a recent federal court ruling. On March 29, the U.S. District Court for the District of Alaska ruled that President Trump's Executive Order to undo oil and gas drilling bans in the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans was illegal. The opinion stated that only Congress has the authority to add areas to this leasing program as codified in the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, thereby making President Trump's Executive Order to proceed with offshore drilling illegal. Based on this court decision and your public statements, we ask you to commit to permanently abandon plans to conduct offshore oil and gas exploration in the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans.

Coastal communities along the Atlantic coast depend upon a clean, safe, and ecologically vibrant environment to support their economies. Opening areas in the Mid and South-Atlantic to oil and gas development will put local economies at risk. In Atlantic coast states, almost 1.4 million jobs are connected to fishing, tourism and recreation, leading to over \$95 billion in gross domestic product. According to 2010 census data, 39 percent of the U.S. population is concentrated in counties directly on the shoreline. As the Deepwater Horizon spill in 2010 clearly showed, oil spills do not respect state borders and can be catastrophic for an entire region. A spill anywhere in the Atlantic would likely cause environmental damage all along the coast.

Coastal communities along the Atlantic Ocean, including our home state of New Jersey, remain steadfast against any plan to drill for oil and gas in our coastal waters. Seismic blasting and offshore drilling anywhere in the Atlantic are threats to the ecosystems and coastal economies of states throughout our region. We simply cannot risk the health and vitality of our coastal communities for the sake of expanding oil and gas development. We ask that you permanently withdraw plans to drill along our Atlantic coastline.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress



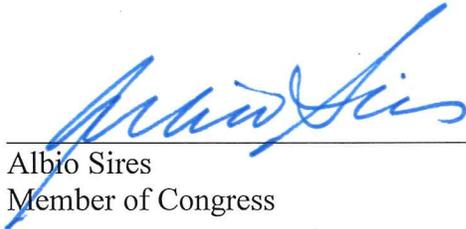
Andy Kim  
Member of Congress



Donald Norcross  
Member of Congress



Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Albio Sires  
Member of Congress



Tom Malinowski  
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress



Josh Gottheimer  
Member of Congress



Mikie Sherrill  
Member of Congress



Jeff Van Drew  
Member of Congress



Christopher H. Smith  
Member of Congress