Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 7, 2012

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary
US Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Secretary:

With the release of the Proposed Outer Continental Shelf Plan for 2012-2017, we write to express strong bipartisan support in the House for the consideration of new and expanded access to the OCS for the production of oil and natural gas.

Opening up new areas of the OCS will bring new jobs, new energy, and new revenues to the Treasury – all at a time where each of these benefits is desperately needed. When finalized, this will be the first five year plan since the presidential and congressional moratoria were lifted in 2008. At the time these moratoria were removed, it was anticipated by the public and the Congress that without these obstacles in place the result would be that future five year plans would include significant new access to the OCS thereby laying the groundwork for new jobs, energy, and revenues. Together, these moratoria had kept more than three quarters of the OCS off limits to exploration and production activities for more than 30 years. Consequently, we were disappointed that the proposed plan announced by your Department on November 8th would open no new areas of the OCS for assessment and leave exploration and development activities focused in the same places where we have been looking for a generation. We continue to believe that any new five year leasing plan should allow for the consideration of expanding into new areas, such as offshore Virginia, as envisioned when the moratoria were lifted.

We recognize that in the wake of the Gulf spill, your Department has moved aggressively to implement new safety and environmental regulations and that you have stated publicly that your Department would not be authorizing new activity if you did not believe it was being done safely. Given these regulatory changes, as well as actions taken by industry to restore confidence, we believe it is time to move ahead in facilitating new access to the OCS and that waiting until 2017 at the earliest to initiate these activities does not serve the public interest. Moreover, the public is strongly supportive of new offshore access and is anxious to realize the promised economic benefits from new access to American resources rather than continuing our overreliance upon foreign sources of energy.

We ask that you take into account these views as you consider the Proposed Five Year Plan for 2012-2017. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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[illegible] UT-3

[illegible]

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[illegible]

Lynn Jenkins

Larry Bucshon

Steve Kings

[illegible]

Sam Johnson

Bill Huizenga

Robert E. Latta

Mike Coffman

[illegible] TX-23

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Diane Black

Mo Brooks

Rob Woodall

Blake Farenthold

Mike McIntyre

John Culberson

Ralph M. Hall

K. Mitt Long

Steven Pearce

Kent Hianks

John Kline

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Harold Rogers

Cathy McMorris Rodgers

Lynn A. Westmoreland

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Lois Gohmert

Shelley Moore Capito

Jack Kingston

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Peter Olson

Kristi Noem

Rodney Alexander

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Bill Johnson

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Kay Granger

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Virginia Foxx

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Joe Boxton

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Charles W Dent

Candice S Miller

Dan Schneider

Tim Griffin

Bob Pitts

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Hans Sack

Ken Yoder

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Ken Calvert

IL-19

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J Randy Forbes

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Martha	Roby
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