

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 10, 2009

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar:

It is our understanding that you have recently been asked to delay Lease Sale 220 that would allow energy exploration and development to take place at least 50 miles from Virginia's shoreline. As members of Virginia's Congressional Delegation, we respectfully ask that you deny this request and proceed with the sale as planned.

We are pleased that the Minerals Management Service (MMS), at the request of the Commonwealth of Virginia, has included Virginia in the current five year Oil and Gas Leasing Program for the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). It is also important to note that, according to MMS, over 79% of Virginians expressed their support for some form of offshore leasing during the public comment period for this plan.

We are also pleased that the MMS has initiated the process of creating a new five-year plan to accelerate use of new areas offshore that are no longer under the moratorium. We want to ensure that Virginia's inclusion in the proposed Mid-Atlantic planning area is maintained.

Given the energy demands of our nation it is vital that Virginia's energy supplies be accessed. Not only will development of this area bring vital energy supplies to our nation, it will create thousands of new jobs and significantly boost the economy of the Commonwealth of Virginia. In fact according to a 2005 study by Old Dominion University, during a 10 year period, offshore natural gas development alone would induce capital investment of \$7.84 billion, yield \$644 million in direct and indirect payroll, and result in \$271 million in state and local taxes. These are very conservative estimates and actual amounts could be greater and provide an even larger capital infusion to the Commonwealth.

We understand that lease sales are a lengthy process. MMS has started the process and the sale of leases cannot even happen until 2011. If things go according to schedule,

and leases are sold in 2011, there would likely still be at least another 12 months of survey work and permitting before exploration takes place. It is also important to note that during every part of this process comments by all Virginians are welcomed and encouraged. Since it is clear this is a lengthy process that relies heavily on public input, we ask that you do not further delay the lease sale. The impacts that exploration and development will have on our nation's energy supplies and the boost it will give to the Virginia economy are substantial. We cannot afford to delay any further.

We thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to working with you as the leasing process moves forward.

Sincerely,

Bob Goodlatte

Eric Cantor

Jeffrey Robert Wittman

J. R. Forbes