

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 2, 2016

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

Dear Secretary Jewell:

We are writing to comment on your agency's proposed 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program. We appreciate the recent decision signaling that the Atlantic Ocean will be off limits to oil and gas leases. However, we are concerned that the plan continues to include new leases to facilitate further investment in offshore fossil fuel development, especially in vulnerable areas such as the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas in the Arctic Ocean.


The Paris agreement demonstrated an unprecedented commitment of 190 countries coming together to address climate change and lower global greenhouse gas emissions. The scientific consensus tells us that the vast majority of known fossil fuel reserves must be left in the ground if we are to avoid the worst effects of climate change. Taking new fossil fuel leases off the table will send another powerful international signal that the United States is indeed dedicated to investing in the transition to a low carbon economy.

Moreover, oil from Arctic drilling is quickly showing itself to be neither necessary nor practical to meet our short- to mid-term energy needs. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), the technologies needed to develop Arctic oil and gas resources remain costly and challenging to develop. In our view, pursuing this type of expensive and environmentally damaging fuel source does not reflect the intent of the March 10, 2016, agreement between the U.S. and Canada to lead the way to a low-carbon global economy over the coming decades, including through science-based efforts to protect the Arctic and its peoples.

The five-year Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program is an important indication of the United States' effort to address global climate change. We urge you to follow the President's climate commitments and remove new fossil fuel leases from the 2017-2022 Program. Because offering new outer continental shelf oil and gas leases will lock in decades of additional greenhouse gas emissions and inherently contradicts our climate goals, we also urge the administration to consider using statutory authority to permanently protect our citizen owned waters from future leasing.

We look forward to working with you to protect our global climate, native communities, natural resource based economies, sensitive ecosystems, and public health.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



Brian Schatz  
United States Senator



Barbara Boxer  
United States Senator



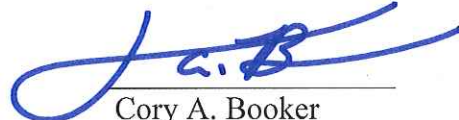
Al Franken  
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



Kirsten E. Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Robert Menendez  
United States Senator