

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 7, 2019

The Honorable David Bernhardt
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

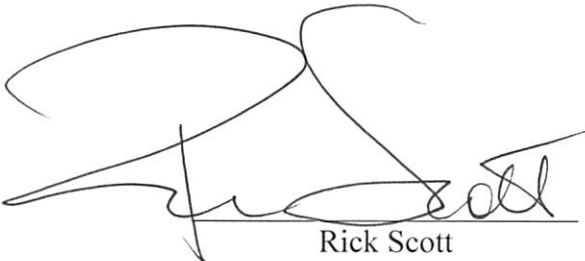
Dear Acting Secretary Bernhardt,

Last year, when the Department of the Interior announced its National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program that would greatly expand offshore drilling opportunities, we expressed our opposition to the inclusion of the moratorium areas in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico (EGOM) Planning Area and called for the immediate removal of all of Florida's offshore waters from consideration. Citing the broad support within the state for protecting Florida's coastline from the potential risks from offshore drilling, your predecessor was publicly supportive of our request. In addition, the people of Florida recently demonstrated this broad support when they overwhelmingly approved an amendment to the state's constitution banning drilling for oil and natural gas in state waters.

Florida's coastline and offshore waters have incredible environmental and economic value not only for Florida, but also for the nation. In fact, several offshore areas surrounding Florida, including all waters east of the Military Mission Line in the EGOM, are essential for developing and sustaining United States military readiness and advanced weapons testing. We remain concerned about the impacts of oil and gas activities on Florida's marine and coastal environment, as well as the military activities critical to our national security. Oil spills, such as the Deepwater Horizon disaster, have demonstrated the catastrophic impacts increased oil and gas drilling around Florida could wreak on our state's environmental resources, fisheries, tourism, and economy.

Once again, we urge the Department to stand by your commitment to exclude the offshore waters around Florida from further consideration in its National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Proposed Plan. We welcome the opportunity to continue working with you to preserve Florida's natural treasures and the economic benefits they help to support for generations to come.

Sincerely,



Rick Scott
U.S. Senator



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator