

November 16, 2016

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We are writing to urge you to permanently protect federal waters off of the West Coast from new oil and gas drilling. Opening up the coast to more fossil fuel development poses a threat to our oceans and the coastal economies that depend on them. We ask you to use the authority granted to you under the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) to prohibit future oil and gas leasing along the West Coast to protect the magnificent coastline forever.

Under Section 12(a) of OCSLA, the president has the authority to withdraw areas from future oil and gas leasing. Many presidents have used this authority to effectively establish offshore drilling moratoria, including for the Pacific. President George H.W. Bush issued a moratorium that protected areas in the Pacific from oil and gas development, and President Bill Clinton later extended that moratorium. While neither one was permanent, we believe that Section 12(a) under OCSLA provides you with the authority to permanently withdraw areas of the outer continental shelf from consideration for leasing.

We appreciate your Administration's ongoing commitment to keep new West Coast lease sales off of the table. We were so pleased to see that the Department of the Interior's 2017-2022 OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Proposed Program did not include any lease sales off of the West Coast. However, without a permanent withdrawal, we cannot be certain that the coastline would not see new oil and gas development in the future.

In October 2015, the six West Coast Senators reintroduced the West Coast Ocean Protection Act, which would prohibit new oil and gas leases in federal waters off the coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington. This bill has been introduced in every Session of Congress since 2010 to send a strong message that the West Coast deserves permanent protection. We simply cannot put our environment and coastal economies more at risk with new offshore oil and gas drilling.

We ask you, now, to help us achieve our goal of permanent protection for the West Coast. Thank you for your consideration of this very important issue.

Sincerely,

Barbara Boxer
United States Senator

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Patty Murray
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

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