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

Dear Secretary Jewell:

As Members of Congress committed to a comprehensive domestic energy strategy, we encourage the Department of the Interior (DOI) to proceed with a new Five Year Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program for 2017-2022 that establishes a rigorous lease sale schedule in the Gulf of Mexico, but also expands opportunity for development to areas not included in the last plan – such as the vast acreage that was opened in 2008 when both the Presidential and Legislative moratoria on offshore drilling expired. A broad, bipartisan majority in the U.S. House of Representatives and the American public have long supported increased development of our nation’s OCS resources. This commitment has been repeatedly demonstrated by passage of legislation that expands access to these new areas, while continuing leasing in existing areas. We wish to see a Five Year Outer Continental Shelf leasing program that reflects these important principles.

The commencement of this program occurs at a critical time in our country’s resurgence as an energy superpower. Increasing onshore production on state and private lands is helping to pull our nation out of a recession and driving down our trade deficit. At the state and local level in Pennsylvania, Texas, Wyoming, Colorado, North Dakota and many others, economic activity related to energy production is creating thousands of jobs and generating increased revenues that are being reinvested in public education, transportation projects, and other municipal improvements. The energy boom on state and private lands stands as a paradigm of our nation’s entrepreneurial spirit. There is no reason why we cannot replicate this vigorous job growth in more states by opening new OCS areas for development as was envisioned in 2008 when the moratoria on the OCS was lifted in a bipartisan fashion between the then Democrat Majority House and President Bush.

Since the 1950s, the Gulf of Mexico has been the world’s preeminent area for offshore drilling alongside thriving fishing and tourism industries. This is where the technological innovation behind pursuing deepwater resources was born and where it has flourished. Today, over 60 years later, the playing field has significantly changed. Countries like Canada, Mexico and China are ramping up their efforts to develop their offshore resources and directly competing with the United States. Simply put: the status quo will not suffice. By producing more American energy from our OCS resources, we can help to insulate our nation from global price shocks and put the United States and our allies on a more secure path.

As you consider areas to include in the 2017-2022 Draft Proposed Program, we note that the administration and the Department of the Interior have made considerable changes to the structure and regulations that govern offshore energy development to enhance safety. The industry has also stepped up with the development of best practices and technologies focused on the areas of spill
prevention, containment, and recovery. We are confident that these changes will allow offshore exploration and development to proceed in an environmentally responsible way.

For these many reasons, we believe the Department must move forward with a Five Year Program that continues to lease in the Gulf of Mexico but also includes new areas with the greatest resource potential as well as areas such as the Mid- and South-Atlantic, or the Arctic, where there is strong bipartisan support from members of Congress, governors, state legislators, local leaders and the general public for allowing oil and natural gas development. With the formation of the 2017-2022 Five Year Program, this administration will be responsible for a decade of offshore lease planning; a legacy of leasing in existing areas will not put our nation’s offshore energy production on sound footing. We cannot afford to pass up this pivotal opportunity to expand safe and responsible OCS energy development.

It is our sincere hope that you will demonstrate a similar commitment to our nation’s energy future by crafting a program that increases offshore production in new areas to create more American jobs, provide much-needed federal and local government revenue, and fortify our nation’s growing position as an energy leader.

Sincerely,

Jeff Duncan
Member of Congress

Bill Flores
Member of Congress

Scott Rigell
Member of Congress

Richard Hudson
Member of Congress

Doc Hastings
Member of Congress

Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress

Rob Bishop
Member of Congress

Bill Cassidy
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Dave Camp
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Tom Cotton
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Patrick McHenry
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Lamar Smith
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