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January 4, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke,

I have strong concerns about the draft proposal on January 4, 2018, opening 25 of the 26 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) planning areas, including the Eastern Gulf of Mexico which remains under a moratorium until 2022. While I certainly share the administration's goal of American energy independence, I believe that in light of horizontal drilling combined with hydraulic fracking, and other new recovery technologies, this can be achieved while protecting the existing military mission line in the Eastern Gulf.

The Eastern Gulf of Mexico is the United States military's largest training area. As aircraft and weapons technologies increase in speed and range, this open area only increases in strategic importance. In fact, the Department of Defense (DoD), in a letter from April 26, 2017, Acting Under Secretary of the Defense for Personnel and Readiness, A.M. Kurta, noted that, "Emerging technologies . . . will require enlarged testing and training footprints, and increased DoD reliance on the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act's moratorium beyond 2022." With ongoing military operations in the Middle East and South/Central Asia, rising tensions with North Korea, and simmering relations with China and Russia, it is imperative that the United States military be as well prepared as possible.

Furthermore, according to a Florida Atlantic University report, Florida beach tourism generates nearly \$50 billion annually. Nearly all of Florida's economy relies directly or indirectly on a tourism economy. The effects of the Deepwater Horizon disaster hit Florida tourism especially hard, despite oil only reaching the easternmost parts of the Florida panhandle. The fear of spoiled beaches led to cancellations and a dip that lasted two years. Opposition to drilling in the Eastern gulf is virtually universal in Florida, crossing all ideologies, parties and interest groups.

I believe that we can achieve American energy dominance and independence from foreign sources but respectfully ask you to reconsider including the Eastern Gulf of Mexico in the draft proposal.

Sincerely,



Francis Rooney
Member of Congress