Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 17, 2019

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

We are writing with an urgent request for a meeting with you in the Oval office to discuss the importance of a permanent moratorium on oil and gas drilling and pre-leasing activity East of the Military Mission Line in the Gulf of Mexico. This moratorium is vital to Florida's tourist-based economy and our national security interests. The overwhelming majority of Floridians want our coast free from offshore drilling – something I urge you to consider as you present your case to the voters.

The people of Florida are clearly opposed to offshore drilling. The November 2018 ballot contained a measure to ban offshore drilling, Amendment 9, which won with more than 68 percent voting in favor. This widespread support should indicate that voters are overwhelmingly against letting the moratorium, which was established in 2006, expire in 2022.

Florida's economy depends on tourism, which requires clean beaches and healthy ecosystems. Our state is known for its pristine beaches and a welcoming, non-industrial environment. Not extending the moratorium on offshore drilling will place Florida at risk as a premier tourist destination. A fact which voters are keenly aware of.

Drilling in the Eastern Gulf is not necessary. Shell's CEO, Ben van Beurden, has already indicated that his company will adapt to the shifting markets, and the company plans to become a major player in the changing energy market.

Further, offshore drilling in this area is incompatible with current and future military operations. The Eastern Gulf is home to the Gulf Test Range, a 120,000 square mile range that stretches from the Florida panhandle to the Keys. This unimpeded training and testing area is a crucial national security asset for military exercises that cannot be carried out anywhere else in the United States. The vast size allows the testing of hypersonic weapons, combat maneuvers training, drone testing, and untold future operations of weapons and platforms that will not only need space for testing, but also, restricted access areas for classified operations.

The proximity to major military bases and its large scale make the Eastern Gulf of Mexico area a unique asset for national defense that cannot be replicated. Additionally, according to the Florida Chamber of Commerce, Florida's military bases have over $70 billion in economic impact on our state.

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If the moratorium established by the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act expires in 2022, this leaves open the possibility of drilling just a few miles from Florida's beaches and shores. Florida faces an existential threat from offshore drilling, which would undermine our $150+ billion tourism- and recreation-based economy. Florida voters expect their elected officials to take action and protect the environment.

We are requesting a timely meeting to address how we can continue to protect Florida's environment, tourism revenue, and the military readiness of the United State of America.

Sincerely,

Francis Rooney
Member of Congress

Matt Gaetz
Member of Congress