

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 9, 2026

The Honorable John Phelan
Secretary of the Navy
U.S. Department of the Navy
1200 Navy Pentagon
Washington, DC 20350

Dear Secretary Phelan:

On November 20, 2025, the Department of the Interior (DOI) released the Draft Proposed Program (DPP) for the 11th National Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program.¹ The proposal includes 34 potential lease sales: 21 in Alaska, 7 in the Gulf of Mexico, and 6 in the Pacific. We write to ask if the Department of the Navy is aware of this proposal and if it is being adequately consulted by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) and DOI.

The DPP would allow drilling in most of the waters off of Alaska, including the Beaufort Sea, Chukchi Sea, Bering Strait, High Arctic, and Cook Inlet, the Eastern Gulf, and off the entire coast of California. The BOEM website states that the DPP announcement came “after considering all Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act Section 18 requirements and factors, as well as input from governors, industry, and the public.”² However, many of the areas proposed for new offshore leasing and drilling overlap with areas where military readiness activities vital to our national security take place—activities that are incompatible with oil drilling and spills. In fact, the Department of Defense (DOD) has raised concerns about oil and gas operations in the past.³

Specifically, the area proposed in the Eastern Gulf falls within the Eastern Gulf Test and Training Range (EGTTR), which supports missions varying from testing missiles and aircraft to conducting surface and subsurface training exercises. Its importance as a critical national security asset led Presidents George W. Bush, Trump, and Biden to place moratoriums on leasing.⁴ The Pacific coast off California includes operational areas and training routes. Similarly, Alaska’s proximity to Russia and China makes it and the waters off it of

¹ *Notice of Availability of the 11th National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program: 1st Analysis and Proposal* MAA104000, 90 Fed. Reg. 52996 (Nov. 24, 2025), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/11/24/2025-20760/notice-of-availability-of-the-11th-national-outer-continental-shelf-oil-and-gas-leasing-draft>.

² Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, *National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program: Development of the 11th National Program*, <https://www.boem.gov/oil-gas-energy/national-program/national-ocs-oil-and-gas-leasing-program>

³ Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Preserving Military Readiness in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico* (May 2018), <https://www.noia.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/USDRE-RTC-on-Mil-Mission-Line-Moratorium-9May18-1.pdf>.

⁴ President George W. Bush signed the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act of 2006 (GOMESA, 43 U.S.C. §1331), which imposed a moratorium on leasing in the Gulf of Mexico through June 2022. President Donald Trump used Section 12(a) of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OCSLA) to withdraw the GOMESA areas for an additional 10 years in October 2020. <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/presidential-actions/memorandum-withdrawal-certain-areas-united-states-outer-continental-shelf-leasing-disposition/>. President Joe Biden permanently protected the area in January 2025 through Section 12(a) of OCSLA. <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2025/01/06/fact-sheet-president-biden-protects-atlantic-and-pacific-coasts-from-offshore-oil-and-gas-drilling/>.

increased importance for military readiness, operations, and field training exercises.^{5 6} Oil and gas activities have the potential to impact these missions negatively.

To protect DOD's mission capabilities from incompatible uses, the Secretary of Defense created the Military Aviation and Installation Assurance Siting Clearinghouse (Clearinghouse) in 2011, which Congress later codified for transmission and electrical energy development in 2023 under 10 U.S.C. § 183a. The purpose of the Clearinghouse is to ensure that incompatible energy development does not adversely affect military operations and readiness, thereby impairing or degrading the armed forces' ability to perform their warfighting missions.

We believe DOD must use the Clearinghouse to properly conduct compatibility reviews and analyze the impacts of each potential lease sale. Because naval operations are most likely to be affected, the Navy should participate in each review.

To ensure that the Committee understands the Department's posture regarding this development, we respectfully request answers to the following questions:

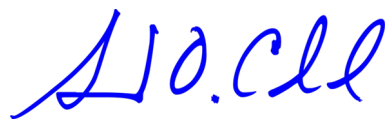
1. **Awareness of Proposal:** Has the Department of the Navy been notified of the DPP by the Department of the Interior or BOEM? If so, when was this notification received?
2. **Operational Impact:** Does the Department have immediate concerns that oil and gas activities in this area will impact military readiness or its ability to perform war-fighting missions?
3. **Assessment Process:** Does the Navy have a process underway to assess the specific potential impacts of oil and gas activities, or is there a plan to constitute a working group or study to evaluate these risks?
4. **Siting Clearinghouse Review:** Has this DPP entered the Department of Defense Military Aviation and Installation Assurance Siting Clearinghouse process for review, as established under 10 U.S.C. § 183a? If not, does the Navy intend to refer this matter to the Clearinghouse?

We look forward to your prompt response regarding how the Department intends to deconflict potential oil and gas activities with national security requirements.

Sincerely,



John Garamendi
Member of Congress
Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Readiness



Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress

⁵ U.S. Department of War, *Northern Edge 2025 Kicks Off Across Alaska*, Braaten, (Aug. 19, 2025), <https://www.war.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/4279080/northern-edge-2025-kicks-off-across-alaska/>.

⁶ The Arctic Institute, *Alaska, not Greenland, should worry the United States in Arctic*, Lamazhapov and Østhagen, (Oct. 28, 2025), <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/alaska-greenland-should-worry-the-united-states-arctic/>.



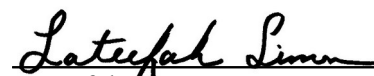
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