

explore Offshore FOR FLORIDA

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor of Florida
400 S Monroe St
Tallahassee, FL 32399

February 8, 2019

Dear Governor DeSantis:

I write you today on behalf of the Explore Offshore coalition to express our support for offshore natural gas and oil exploration and the opportunity to access the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) and portions of the Gulf of Mexico. The members of the coalition believe strongly that we should keep all energy production options open not only to maintain our nation's energy self-reliance but also to maintain the incredible quality of life we have here in the Sunshine State. We are mindful of your concern for Florida's natural beauty and we share the belief that future exploration should be done in a safe and responsible way.

We hope you will consider supporting the inclusion of the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) and the Gulf of Mexico into the Department of Interior's 5-year offshore program for 2019-2024. This could significantly benefit our state by potentially creating thousands of high paying jobs---including in areas of the panhandle that were devastated by Hurricane Michael.

Explore Offshore is comprised of chambers of commerce, trade associations, military contractors, women and minority owned businesses, faith organizations, and more from all across the state and the country. Our coalition is dedicated to responsibly securing America's energy future, and that begins with expanding domestic natural gas and oil development, specifically in the Eastern Gulf and the Atlantic, which could spur over \$3 billion in annual spending, add more than \$1.2 billion to our state and local tax revenues over the next two decades, and support more than 64,000 jobs in Florida.

Careers in the natural gas and oil industry have an average salary of \$113,000 per year for exploration and development jobs, which often do not require a four-year degree. For the many Floridians who are looking for a high-paying job to support their families, this opportunity is one we hope you'll strongly consider. Additionally, industry investments and new state tax revenues from natural gas and oil development could be critical to Florida's budget as our state population is expected to grow from 21 million to 26 million in the next 12 years.

Further exploration offshore can occur in conjunction with our strong tourism and fishing industries, as evidenced by our neighbors in the Gulf who support a thriving \$189 billion per

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year tourism industry while also producing offshore natural gas and oil to contribute to our nation's energy and economic security.

Beyond the clear economic benefits that this will bring to all Floridians, expansion of energy exploration and production to the Eastern Gulf and Atlantic will benefit and work well alongside with the U.S. military – who, as you may be aware, is the single-largest consumer of domestic energy resources. The more energy self-sufficient our country is the stronger is its national security, not to mention our military assets can be deployed more strategically when U.S. energy supplies are plentiful and can be used to help meet the world demand for energy. Notably, a May 2018 Department of Defense (DOD) report to Congress confirmed that U.S. military training can occur alongside U.S. natural gas and oil exploration and production in the Eastern Gulf.

With the significant technological advancements that have occurred in recent years, we can efficiently develop offshore natural gas and oil more safely now than ever before. Safety and reduced environmental impacts continue to be the highest priorities for the industry. The U.S. economy is growing and our carbon emissions are at their lowest levels in 25 years due in large part to our increased use of natural gas in electricity generation. Opening new areas in the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic OCS to energy exploration and development would help ensure our nation's continued energy leadership, help strengthen the economy, and create job security for generation to come.

While we know this issue has created passionate debate, we want you to know that there is a strong, united group of Floridians who supports offshore natural gas and oil development as a means to lift up Florida's economy and strengthen our communities.

We look forward to working with you to address any questions you may have. On behalf of Florida's Explore Offshore members listed below, we thank you for your consideration of this opportunity to create a stronger Florida.

Respectfully yours,

Jeff Kottkamp,
Co-Chair
Explore Offshore Florida
Former Lieutenant Governor of Florida

Miriam Ramirez,
Co-Chair
Explore Offshore Florida
Former State Senator from Puerto Rico

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Explore Offshore for Florida is supported by the following organizations, associations, and individuals.

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Ramon Hernandez, pastor
Dilcia Macedo, Angels for Kids on Call
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CC: Acting Secretary David Bernhardt, U.S. Department of the Interior
Florida Congressional Delegation