

*explore*  
**Offshore**  
FOR NORTH CAROLINA

The Honorable Roy Cooper  
Governor of North Carolina  
North Carolina Office of the Governor  
20301 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-0301

February 8, 2019

Dear Governor Cooper:

I write you today on behalf of the Explore Offshore coalition to express our support for offshore natural gas and oil development in the Atlantic Outer Continental Shelf (OCS). Opening offshore federal waters to energy development presents a unique opportunity for North Carolina to boost the state economy, create new well-paying jobs, and create new revenue sources for important issues such as state infrastructure and public schools. Explore Offshore represents nearly 40 North Carolina-based businesses and community leaders, and we urge you to support the inclusion of the Atlantic OCS into the Department of Interior's 5-year offshore program for 2019-2024. Doing so would benefit North Carolina and could help create thousands of jobs across the nation, help the nation to become more energy secure and diversify coastal economies.

The Explore Offshore coalition is made up of more than 200 diverse groups and individuals from North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Georgia, Florida, and several national groups. Explore Offshore's membership includes 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 Atlantic, which could spur \$3 billion in annual spending, add more than \$2.5 billion to our state and local tax revenues over the next two decades, and support nearly 56,000 jobs in North Carolina.

Careers in the natural gas and oil industry have an average salary of \$113,000 and frequently do not require a four-year degree. And further, these are jobs that are well-suited for our millions of veterans looking for employment in the civilian workforce. As the state seeks to create higher-paying jobs and diversify economically, this opportunity is one we can't afford to pass up. We urge you to consider the benefits of bringing the offshore natural gas and oil industry to North Carolina.

The year-round well-paying jobs that the industry could bring into our state would supplement the seasonal nature of jobs in the hospitality sector and diversify the state economy that heavily relies on tourism. New revenue streams from offshore exploration and development could be used to improve our roads and bridges, making it easier and even more attractive for tourists to travel to our beaches.

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Beyond the clear economic benefits that this will bring to all North Carolinians, expansion of our energy production to include the Southeastern Atlantic will benefit our military – who, as you may be aware, is the single-largest fuel buyer in the United States. Increased domestic production of natural gas and oil is expected to reduce our economy’s reliance on imports of energy resources from foreign nations, which often do not share our high democratic standards and are unreliable energy suppliers. 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.

With the significant technological advancements that have occurred in the 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 up new areas in the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic OCS to energy exploration and development would help ensure the nation’s continued energy leadership, 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 North Carolinians who supports offshore natural gas and oil development as a means to lift up North Carolina economy and strengthen our communities.

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

Respectfully yours,

Nat Robertson,  
Chairman  
Explore Offshore North Carolina

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Explore Offshore for North Carolina is supported by the following organizations, associations, and individuals:

North Carolina Association of Builders and Contractors	Dove's BBQ
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Red Wolf Broadcasting Association	Bladenboro Hardware
Allegra Marketing and Print	D&D Electrical Service
Civitas Institute	North Carolina Energy Forum
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