



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Lieutenant Governor

Ralph S. Northam
Lieutenant Governor

(804) 786-2078
Fax: (804) 786-7514
TTY/TDD: 1-800-828-1120
EMAIL: ltgov@ltgov.virginia.gov

February 25, 2016

Ms. Abigail Ross Hopper
Director, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
(HM-3120)
381 Elden Street
Herndon, Virginia 20170

Re: Virginia Lieutenant Governor Comments on Draft Proposed 2017-2022 Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program for the Mid-Atlantic Coast Including the Commonwealth of Virginia

Dear Ms. Hopper,

As Lieutenant Governor of Virginia, I write to ask that Virginia be excluded from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management's next iteration of the Five Year Oil and Gas Leasing Program.

I grew up on Virginia's Eastern Shore and have worked just about every job one might have on the Chesapeake Bay. Over the years, I have witnessed the demise of the Chesapeake Bay and decided to run for public office in large part to work toward its restoration. As a State Senator representing the Eastern Shore and Hampton Roads, I was proud to carry legislation to remove phosphorus from home fertilizers and to create the Coastal Flooding Working Group, which studies how Virginia's coastal communities can prepare for the effects of climate change. I also led the effort to ban the winter dredging of blue crabs.

My wife Pam works for Lynnhaven River NOW, a group dedicated to restoring and protecting Virginia Beach waterways, and together we have made some great restorative progress working with our partners throughout the Bay's watershed, including neighboring states as well as the private sector and the federal government. However, we still have much more work left to do.

As Lieutenant Governor, I work every day to grow Virginia's economy by retaining and bringing more good jobs to the Commonwealth. As you may know, almost half of the economy of the Hampton Roads region is tied to our military assets, and we are in constant competition with other states to retain and grow these resources.



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Lieutenant Governor

Ralph S. Northam
Lieutenant Governor

(804) 786-2078
Fax: (804) 786-7514
TTY/TDD: 1-800-828-1120
EMAIL: ltgov@ltgov.virginia.gov

On the Eastern Shore, we have made significant investments in NASA-Wallops, and its unique location positions us to grow our aerospace industry by leaps and bounds in the coming years. We should not do anything that would jeopardize our strong position with the military and NASA.

The tourism industry is the fifth largest private employer in Virginia, with travelers spending \$22.4B annually and supporting more than 200,000 jobs. Tourism is particularly important to our coastal communities, which is why you see groups including the Virginia Restaurant, Lodging & Travel Association, County of Accomack, Virginia Beach Restaurant and Hotel Associations, and hundreds of small businesses unified in their opposition to offshore drilling.

In addition to tourism, the Commonwealth has enjoyed significant growth in our seafood industry over the recent years. We are the leading seafood producer on the East Coast, the third largest producer in the country, and lead the nation in hard clam aquaculture. Our annual oyster harvest alone has a more than \$50M economic impact. This is all contingent on healthy and clean water, which is only possible through responsible environmental stewardship.

I understand that this process can be reevaluated in just a couple of years. Given the uncertainty over how royalties would be disbursed, the concerns I have cited above, and the overall risk assumed by the Commonwealth, it would be best to take a conservative approach and exclude Virginia from the proposed leasing program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. S. Northam".

Ralph S. Northam