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# California State Senate

SENATOR  
JOHN LAIRD

SEVENTEENTH SENATE DISTRICT



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May 9, 2025

Kelly Hammerle  
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (VAM-LD)  
45600 Woodland Road  
Sterling, VA 20166-9216

Subject: Opposition to the Proposed 11<sup>th</sup> National OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program

Dear Ms. Hammerle:

I am writing this letter as the former Secretary for the California Natural Resources Agency (2011-2019); the current State Senator for the 17<sup>th</sup> Senate District, which includes the coastal areas for San Luis Obispo, Monterey, and Santa Cruz counties; and as a former Mayor of a coastal jurisdiction – in strong opposition to the proposed 11<sup>th</sup> National Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program.

On April 30, 2025, the Bureau of Ocean Management (BOEM) announced a public-comment period to receive input on the 2029 National Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Oil and Gas Leasing Program (2029 Program) that would govern oil and gas leasing in federal waters off the United States coastline, including California. **I strongly oppose any and all oil and gas leasing off the coast of California**, for the reasons stated below.

The issue of oil and gas leasing off the coast of California has been the topic of significant discussion and advocacy over the past several decades. And for good reason; among the impacts that Central Coast residents and the environment have experienced due to such activities is the massive 1969 oil spill off the coast of Santa Barbara (which fouled coastal waters and caused catastrophic environmental as well as economic damage), and the 2015 pipeline burst that polluted the same coastal area, killing and injuring wildlife and impacting commercial and recreational activities.

These and other events raised public awareness of the significant risks associated with offshore oil drilling. Also, as global citizens with a growing understanding of the threats of climate change, great opposition has continued to mount against oil and gas leasing as it will only deepen the state's dependence on fossil fuels and undermine California's efforts to manage climate change and reach its ambitious renewable energy goals.

The West Coast states of the U.S. have consistently opposed offshore oil and gas leasing. In 2014, while I served as the Secretary of Natural Resources, Governor Brown and the governors of Washington and Oregon submitted a letter to then-U.S. Secretary of the Interior, noting the significant impacts that a large oil spill would have on the population, natural resources, recreation, and economies of the West Coast. The governors urged the science-based, national energy policy to invest in energy efficiency and *alternative* renewable energy sources. In a subsequent letter in 2017, the governors of the same states urged the Secretary of the Interior to exclude the West Coast from any oil and gas lease sales in the 2019-2024 Program.

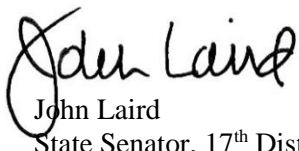
In addition, over the years, at least 65 California cities and counties (including within San Luis Obispo, Monterey, and Santa Cruz counties) have passed resolutions and taken other actions in fierce opposition to offshore oil drilling. These local opposition campaigns represent communities with over 21 million Californians – more than half of the state’s population.

Many of these local jurisdictions did not just pass resolutions, they passed local ballot measures that prohibited zoning for on-shore support facilities for offshore oil activities without a vote of the people. Such ordinances are still in effect for 27 California cities and counties. The ballot measure passed in 1985 by the voters in my home city of Santa Cruz, in an election where I was also on the ballot, and garnered 82% of the vote. These ordinances were challenged in federal court, and upheld.

Even more concerning than the 2029 Program proposal to develop offshore oil leases off the California coast is the outrageous suggestion that even within marine sanctuaries, including the Channel Islands and Chumash Heritage sanctuaries, new lease sales for oil and gas exploration and drilling are under consideration. This is a flagrant violation of federal law, which specifically provides that such activities are not allowed on the “outer Continental Shelf within the exterior boundaries of any unit of the National Park System, National Wildlife Refuge System, or the National Marine Sanctuary System, or any National Monument.” (Energy Policy Act of 2005, Sec. 388 (10). Indeed, federal regulations prohibit multiple activities within national marine sanctuaries, including “new offshore oil and gas exploration, development, and production.” (15 C.F.R. Sec. 922.232).

I urge your opposition to any oil and gas leasing off of the California Central Coast, and beyond. The risk of environmental and economic catastrophe, as well as the fact this takes our nation in exactly the wrong direction in managing climate change, renders this proposal wholly contrary to the best interests of the state and nation. And consideration of any such leasing within any national marine sanctuary is not only contrary to federal law, it’s offensive to those who strived for years, and with the support of hundreds of thousands of people, to ensure the permanent protection of these unique regions with ecologically rich, beautiful, and commercially important marine resources.

Sincerely,



John Laird  
State Senator, 17<sup>th</sup> District

cc: US Senator Alex Padilla  
US Senator Adam Schiff  
US Representative Salud Carbajal  
US Representative Jimmy Panetta  
Northern Chumash Tribal Council  
CA Central Coast National Marine Sanctuaries  
Senator Monique Limon  
Assemblymember Dawn Addis  
Assemblymember Gregg Hart  
Assemblymember Gail Pellerin  
Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Luis Obispo County Supervisors  
Coastal City Mayors  
Save Our Shores  
Sierra Club  
Surfrider Foundation