Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 22, 2014

Secretary Sally Jewell
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell,

As Members of the California Congressional delegation, we write to urge you and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) to exclude any offshore oil and gas lease sales in the Northern California, Central California, and Southern California Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Planning Areas from the Draft Proposed 2017-2022 OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program.

Californians have repeatedly spoken out against new offshore drilling. Since 1969, 24 city and county governments have passed anti-drilling measures and the State has enacted a permanent ban on new offshore leasing in state waters. Serious accidents and environmental damage can and do occur at offshore drilling rigs. These spills and leaks, air and water pollution, and the industrialization of the shoreline threaten public health, impair marine resources, and wreak havoc on our economy, especially on the state's critically important tourism, fishing and recreation industries, which inject billions of dollars into the California economy every year.

Energy companies are not producing oil and gas on the vast majority of land they already hold in offshore leases. The Department should be pushing to ensure that these companies are diligently developing the land that they already have before offering new federal leases. Furthermore, the amount of oil and gas available from OCS leases currently off limits is small compared to what is already open to drilling and would not significantly impact energy prices. Opening additional offshore areas to drilling will only allow these companies to warehouse more public land and put more of our vibrant coastal tourism economies and fragile shoreline ecosystems at risk.

Rather than expanding oil and gas development, the Department should – with proper consultation and consideration given to all relevant stakeholders – continue its focus on developing clean, renewable sources of offshore energy. It is imperative that we promote the use of these clean technologies and protect the integrity of our state's coastline from new offshore oil and gas development for both current and future Californians.

The known risks of expanding offshore drilling in these areas far outweigh any potential benefits. We therefore urge you to continue these longstanding protections and not include the waters off California's coast in the new draft five-year plan. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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CC: Ms. Kelly Hammerle, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

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Sen. Barbara Boxer

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Rep. Judy Chu
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