

RUSSELL FRY
7TH DISTRICT, SOUTH CAROLINA
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY
AND COMMERCE
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4007

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June 10, 2025

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum:

As the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) initiates its public engagement process to develop the 11th National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program, I write to respectfully urge that the existing moratorium on offshore oil and gas leasing off South Carolina's coast remain in place.

There is no question that our country must unleash American energy, expanding domestic production, cutting red tape, and reasserting our energy independence. I fully support President Trump's bold agenda to achieve American energy dominance, including his Executive Order 14154, which rightly prioritizes the development of our domestic energy resources, reduces foreign dependence, and reestablishes permitting efficiency.

At the same time, I believe energy development must be pursued in a way that respects the distinct economic and environmental realities of each region. In the Grand Strand, our coastline is not just scenery—it is the backbone of a dynamic tourism and maritime economy. Spanning over 60 miles of beaches and serving as home to more than 425 hotels and 2,000 restaurants, the Myrtle Beach area alone welcomes over 18 million visitors annually, generating \$13.2 billion in direct spending and supporting more than 82,000 local jobs. This coastal engine funds our schools, sustains our small businesses, and underwrites critical public services. The character and prosperity of Grand Strand communities are directly tied to the health of our marine ecosystem, which not only draws millions to our shores but also supports vibrant fisheries.

In recognition of these factors, President Trump issued a memorandum on September 8, 2020, withdrawing the South Atlantic Planning Area, including waters off South Carolina, from consideration for oil and gas leasing for a ten-year period beginning July 1, 2022. That action reflected the will of South Carolinians and was critical to safeguarding the economic lifeblood of the Grand Strand and Lowcountry.

Across our state, there is a strong, bipartisan consensus opposing offshore drilling off our coast. In 2019, every single coastal municipality in South Carolina adopted resolutions opposing

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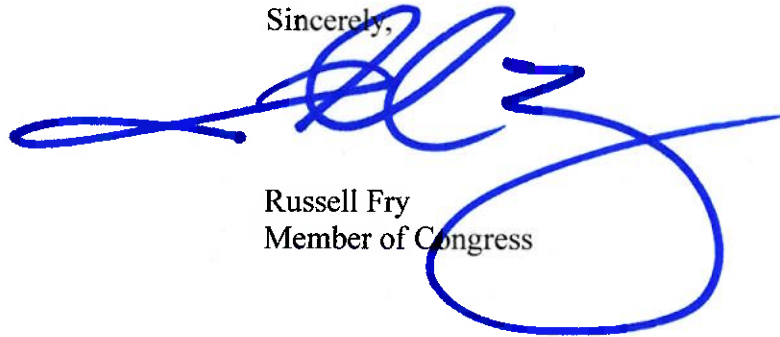
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exploration and development. That same year, Governor McMaster signed into law South Carolina's state budget, which included a provision—passed with bipartisan support—prohibiting the use of state or local funds for the planning, permitting, or licensing of offshore oil and gas activities. These are not symbolic gestures—they are expressions of deep, sustained local opposition.

As BOEM carries out the President's directives on offshore energy policy, I respectfully urge you to maintain the current exemption of South Carolina's offshore waters from the upcoming leasing program. Preserving this status not only honors the voice of the people of South Carolina—it reinforces the principle that a robust national energy strategy can and should be tailored to local and regional needs.

Thank you for your leadership and your service to our country. I look forward to working with you to advance an energy policy that is bold, balanced, and respectful of the unique character of our state.

Sincerely,



Russell Fry
Member of Congress