

March 8, 2018

President Donald Trump
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC

Secretary Ryan Zinke
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear President Trump and Secretary Zinke,

As religious leaders, we write in opposition to expanded oil and gas drilling and seismic testing in public waters. Offshore drilling brings unacceptable risks to God's oceans and coastal communities.

Offshore drilling could produce perilous consequences like oil spills that can poison the God's oceans, including wildlife and clean water. No oil company or Administration can guarantee the safety of drilling offshore.

Because the faith community serves as first responders in disasters, we know painfully well the devastation that oil spills can cause to our communities. It is well documented that oil spills can wreak havoc on ecosystems and local businesses and residents alike. Seismic testing that often precedes offshore oil and gas development also harms marine life, including imperiled sea mammals and important fisheries.

Any increased oil and gas drilling offshore will inevitably lead to increased pollution, oil spills, and harm to marine life. Drilling not only impacts marine life, but also impacts people who depend upon the oceans for food and jobs.

Expanding drilling into our Arctic, Atlantic, Eastern Gulf of Mexico and Pacific waters—still largely unspoiled by drilling's inherent hazards and harms—would put our coastal residents, businesses, oceans, and climate at grave risk. Exposing the Gulf of Mexico to additional drilling would further burden residents with the pollution and risks that have already caused great, lasting harm to the region.

God created the oceans with an abundance of life and, as stewards of God's earth, we should work to preserve and protect God's marine creation. As people of faith, we also uphold our duty to love our neighbors. Oceans provide food sources and livelihoods for millions in the U.S. and globally.

We urge the Trump Administration to focus on investments in renewable sources of energy such as wind and solar, as well as maximize our energy efficiency, instead of looking to expand fossil fuel exploration in God's ocean. God entrusts us to be good stewards of God's oceans and coasts. We should honor this sacred duty and position our country as a global leader in energy stewardship.

We ask you to join us as God's steward of the oceans and to respect the local residents, businesses, and millions of Americans who have already made clear their support for preserving, not drilling off our nation's beaches.

Sincerely,

Rev. Bernice Powell Jackson
United Church of Christ
Tampa

Rev. Ann Goraczko
Episcopal Church
North Miami Beach

Rev. Shanda Mahurin
Episcopal Church
Spring Hill

Rev. William Hoff
Riverside Presbyterian Church
Jacksonville

Rev. Linda Reilly
United Church of Christ
Boynton Beach

Rev. Mary Beth Harper
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Silver Springs

Rev. Dr. Robert Carpenter
American Baptist Churches, USA
Penney Farms

Rev. Susan Sherwood
United Church of Christ
St. Petersburg

Rev. Dr. David Swink
American Baptist Churches, USA
Ecumenical Theological Seminary past president
Deland

Rev. Dr. Russell L. Meyer
Florida Council of Churches
Tampa

Rev. Samuel Trice
Drake Memorial Baptist
Miami

Rev. Shunda Wilkin
Carter Tabernacle CME
Orlando

Rev. C.A. Smith, Sr.
Peace Temple CME
Pensacola

Rev. John Philpot, Sr.
Talbot Chapel AMEZ
Pensacola

Rev. Bobby McKenzie
Houser Memorial AMEZ
Pensacola

Rev. D. Malone Smith
Community of Hope AME
Tallahassee

Rev. Marvin Zanders, II
St. Paul AME
Jacksonville

Rev. Mary Gutierrez
Pensacola

Rev. Joan Verret
Episcopal

Rev. Terence Gray
St. Mark AME
Orlando

Rev. John Williams, Sr.
Ward Chapel AME
Winter Park

Rev. Eugene Diamond
Abyssina Missionary Baptist
Jacksonville

Rev. H.T. Rim
St Joseph Missionary Baptist
Jacksonville

Re. Stanley Walker
Tabernacle Baptist
Jacksonville

Rev. Zachary Royal
St. Mary's First Baptist
Coral Gables