

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. Laura Inscoe  
Episcopal Church  
Richmond

Bishop Carroll Baltimore  
Global Alliance Interfaith Networks  
Lorton

Rev. Morris Fleischer  
Newport-Mt. Olivet UMC  
Christiansburg

Rev. Dr. Richard Cizek  
Interfaith Power and Light  
Fredericksburg

Rev. Dr. Jonathan Barton  
Virginia Council of Churches  
Midlothian

Rev. Dr. Joseph Crockett  
National Council of Churches  
Midlothian

Sister Margaret Mathewson  
Sisters of Bon Secours  
Norfolk

Christy Dowdy  
Arlington Church of the Brethren  
Harrisburg

Rev. Thurman Echols  
Moral Hill Baptist  
Axton

Rev. Alvin Edwards Mount  
Zion Baptist  
Charlottesville

Rev. Geoffrey Guns  
Second Calvary Baptist  
Norfolk

Rev. Luther Allen  
First Baptist-Lynnhaven  
Virginia Beach

Rev. Andre Jefferson  
Bethel AME  
Hampton

Rev. Oretha Cross  
Saint Paul AME  
Newport News

Rev. Veron Ricks  
Saint Mark AME  
Virginia Beach

Rev. Cheryl Fleming  
Broomfield CME  
Richmond

Rev. Reginald Woodhouse  
First Baptist-Jefferson Park  
Newport News

Rev. Robert Murray  
First Baptist  
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Rev. Robert Pettis  
Zion Baptist  
Richmond

Rev Jacquelyn Hollingsworth  
Christ Chapel AME  
Sterling

Rev. Etoria Goggins  
First African AME  
Manassas

Rev. Robert Smith  
First AME  
Alexandria