

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 8, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
Department of Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

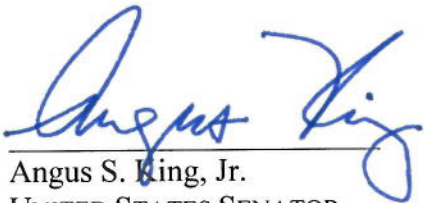
We write to express our opposition to the five-year oil and gas leasing plan released by the Interior Department that proposes opening up vast portions of U.S. waters for possible oil exploration and development, including along the Atlantic seaboard and the coast of Maine.


We oppose any effort to open waters off the coast of Maine or any proximate area to offshore drilling, which could negatively affect the health of Maine's fisheries and other coastal resources, threatening to harm not only the environment but the state's economy as well.

Maine's economic stability—and countless Mainers' livelihoods—has always depended on the health of the ocean. The Maine lobster industry, for example, has an estimated \$1.7 billion impact to the state's economy annually, not to mention the many other fishing, aquaculture, and coastal tourism industries in Maine that help to support the economy. These critical industries are dependent on Maine's pristine waters, and even a minor spill could damage irreparably the ecosystem in the Gulf of Maine, including the lobster larvae and adult lobster populations therein. Further, offshore seismic testing exploration has been shown in some cases to disrupt migratory patterns of fish and sea mammals. In other words, we believe the potential harm posed by oil and gas exploration and development off Maine's shores far outweighs any potential benefit.

We oppose the Department's draft plan, and look forward to working with you to ensure that it is revised to pose no unnecessary threats to the economy and way of life in coastal Maine.

Sincerely,


Angus S. King, Jr.
UNITED STATES SENATOR


Susan M. Collins
UNITED STATES SENATOR

Cc: Walter Cruickshank, Ph.D., Acting Director, Bureau of Energy Management