

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

January 10, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Haaland:

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is conducting oversight of President Biden’s decision to permanently ban future oil and natural gas production in 625 million acres of U.S. coastal territory.¹ Despite promising a “peaceful and orderly transition,”² President Biden has brazenly attempted to disrupt President-elect Trump’s robust American energy priorities by further discouraging domestic energy production through this action at the very end of his term. We request a briefing to understand how the Department of the Interior (DOI) plans to implement the ban of offshore oil and natural gas leasing in light of the incoming administration’s intention to immediately end it.³

On January 6, 2025, through an executive memorandum issued to the DOI,⁴ President Biden completed the closure of “670 million acres of US lands, waters, and ocean to oil and gas drilling – more than any president in history.”⁵ The closure of over 90 percent of the acres just 14 days before President-elect Trump’s inauguration is a blatantly political and erratic last-gasp attempt to salvage misguided aims of the Green New Deal by raising long-term energy costs on American consumers. This decision disrupts the smooth transition of an incoming administration seeking to fully recognize the potential of American energy for the benefit of our consumers, our companies, and our allies.

The Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act (OSCLA) affords the President broad authority to “withdraw from disposition any of the unleased lands of the outer Continental Shelf.”⁶ In

¹ David Hodari, *Biden bans new offshore drilling along most of the U.S. coastline*, NBC News (Jan. 6, 2025).

² The White House, *Remarks by President Biden in Address to the Nation* (Nov. 7, 2024).

³ Robin Bravender, *Trump promises to undo Biden lame-duck drilling ban*, E&E News (Jan. 6, 2025).

⁴ The White House, *Memorandum on the Withdrawal of Certain Areas of the United States Outer Continental Shelf from Oil or Natural Gas Leasing* (Jan. 6, 2025).

⁵ Cathy Landry, *White House shuts 625 million acres of federal water to fossil fuel leasing*, Oil & Gas Journal (Jan. 6, 2025).

⁶ 43 U.S.C. § 1341 (a).

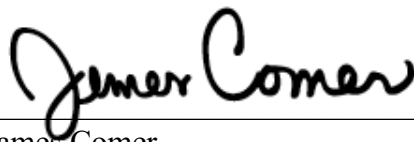
President-elect Trump's first administration, his executive action to reverse former President Obama's exercise of this authority in 2015 and 2016 led to court battles with radical environmental groups seeking to keep Obama's offshore leasing bans in place.⁷ These battles lasted the entirety of President-elect Trump's first administration and stalled American energy independence efforts. President Biden, with just two weeks left in office, has now issued a much larger ban under the OSCLA designed to offer radical environmental groups a path to litigate President-elect Trump's energy agenda.

DOI plays a crucial role in the management of our country's offshore energy resources. When President Biden's ban was announced, you defended it,⁸ in contrast to President Biden's assurance that his administration would work with President-elect Trump's team.⁹ Because of the upcoming inauguration later this month and the end of the Biden Administration, the Committee requests a briefing immediately from DOI to provide clarity on the politically-motivated ban which will require time and resources of the incoming administration and the 119th Congress to remedy.

Please make arrangements to schedule a briefing with Committee staff on this matter as soon as possible, but no later than January 13, 2025. To schedule the briefing, please contact Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Majority Staff at (202) 225-5074.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,



James Comer
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

cc: The Honorable Gerry Connolly, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

⁷ See Natural Resources Defense Council, *League of Conservation Voters v. Trump (Offshore Leasing Ban)* (April 13, 2021).

⁸ U.S. Dep't of the Interior, Press Release, *President Biden Takes Action to Protect America's Coastlines from Future Oil and Gas Leasing* (Jan. 6, 2025).

⁹ *Supra*, note 2.