ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 84

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 3, 2020

Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman ANNETTE QUIJANO
District 20 (Union)

SYNOPSIS

Opposes expansion of oil and natural gas drilling on Outer Continental Shelf.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

AN ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION opposing the expansion of oil and natural gas drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf.

WHEREAS, New Jersey's coastline is the State's most famous natural resource, and attracts millions of visitors from across the country and world every year; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey's tourism industry generates over $44 billion annually, directly supports more than 321,000 jobs, and indirectly supports nearly 10 percent of the State's workforce, and much of this industry is centered along New Jersey's coastline; and

WHEREAS, Revenue from New Jersey tourism generates $4.9 billion in State and local taxes and $5.6 billion in federal taxes annually; and

WHEREAS, The waters off New Jersey's coast are home to a diverse array of unique wildlife, such as several species of endangered whales and rare migratory birds; and

WHEREAS, The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) in the United States Department of the Interior approved a plan in January 2017 which did not include any oil and natural gas leases in the Atlantic Ocean through 2022; and

WHEREAS, On April 28, 2017, President Trump signed Executive Order No. 13795 entitled "Implementing an America-First Offshore Energy Strategy"; and

WHEREAS, The executive order requires BOEM to consider revising the leasing schedule to include annual lease sales to the maximum extent permitted by law in the Mid-Atlantic and South Atlantic regions, among others; and

WHEREAS, The executive order also requires the Secretary of the Interior to reconsider rules concerning an operator's financial capacity to pay for leasing requirements, and safety regulations passed in the aftermath of the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill of 2010; and

WHEREAS, The executive order also seeks to loosen regulatory requirements on seismic airgun testing, which BOEM previously estimated could injure up to 11,748 bottlenose dolphins, 6,147 short-beaked dolphins, 5,848 Atlantic spotted dolphins, 4,631 short-finned pilot whales, and 3,993 striped dolphins per year in the Atlantic Ocean; and

WHEREAS, On May 1, 2017, the United States Department of the Interior announced Secretarial Order No. 3350 which further implemented the President's executive order; and

WHEREAS, On December 29, 2017, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement in the United States Department of the Interior formally proposed rolling back the safety regulations put in place after the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill designed to prevent such disasters from occurring in the future; and

WHEREAS, On January 4, 2018, the United States Department of the Interior announced a Draft Proposed Program for Oil and Gas Drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf; and

WHEREAS, This program proposes to make over 90 percent of the total Outer Continental Shelf area available for oil and natural gas drilling, while presently 94 percent of Outer Continental Shelf land is off limits to such activity; and

WHEREAS, The program's proposed drilling area includes areas off of the coast of New Jersey and the coasts of neighboring states, where an oil spill could have significant impacts on New Jersey's fishing and tourism industries; and

WHEREAS, These executive actions represent a particularly serious threat because they not only call for an expanded drilling area, but also roll back safety regulations designed to prevent future spills; and

WHEREAS, Opening the Atlantic Coast for offshore oil and natural gas drilling would put beaches, fisheries, marine life, and businesses all along the coast of New Jersey at risk; and

WHEREAS, Senator Menendez, Senator Booker, Governor Christie, and Governor Murphy have all expressed opposition to the plan to permit drilling off the Atlantic Coast, each recognizing the grave threat such industrialization poses to the economy and the ecology of the State; and

WHEREAS, There is broad bipartisan consensus among New Jersey's State and federal representatives that oil and natural gas drilling in the Atlantic Ocean would harm commercial and recreational fisheries and wildlife, while threatening the economy of New Jersey's coastal municipalities; and

WHEREAS, The governors of 15 of the 22 states impacted by the plan have expressed opposition to expanding Outer Continental Shelf drilling, including both Democratic and Republican governors; and

WHEREAS, Given the overwhelming scientific consensus that fossil fuel use is causing potentially irreversible global climate change, it is a moral imperative that the United States invest in energy infrastructure that does not produce greenhouse gases; and

WHEREAS, As a coastal state, New Jersey is particularly sensitive to many of the effects of global climate change, such as rising sea levels and more extreme storms, and the United States government has an obligation to protect the citizens of this State; and

WHEREAS, Particularly at a time when the rest of the world is shifting focus toward creating new green energy development, the Trump Administration should be expanding these new technologies instead of exposing New Jerseyans to the hazards associated with offshore oil and natural gas drilling; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED *by the General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. This House strongly opposes the expansion of oil and natural gas drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf, as doing so would risk

the health, safety, economy, and natural resources of New Jersey's coastal communities and the entire State.

2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State, shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly to the President of the United States, the Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior, the Director of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management in the United States Department of the Interior, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement in the United States Department of the Interior, the Acting Administrator of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, every member of Congress elected from the State of New Jersey, the Governor of New Jersey, and the Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection.

STATEMENT

This resolution strongly opposes the expansion of oil and natural gas drilling on the Outer Continental Shelf and the recent steps the Trump Administration has taken to further the process of permitting drilling.

The plan to expand offshore drilling to virtually the entire Outer Continental Shelf area threatens the economy of New Jersey and the sensitive fish and wildlife areas along the State's coast. The Jersey Shore is a critical part of New Jersey's $44 billion tourism industry, and is responsible for hundreds of thousands of jobs. Furthermore, New Jersey's coast is home to a wide array of rare fish and wildlife, and a spill in the proposed drilling areas could devastate the sensitive ecologies of the Jersey Shore.

The Trump Administration has continued to take steps toward greatly expanding oil and natural gas exploration and development despite near universal opposition from elected officials. For example, Senator Booker, Senator Menendez, Governor Christie, and Governor Murphy have all opposed the plans to expand oil and natural gas drilling, each recognizing the great risks that offshore oil and natural gas development poses to the economy and ecology of the State. Furthermore, the governors of 15 of the 22 states impacted by the plan have expressed opposition to expanding Outer Continental Shelf drilling, including both Democratic and Republican governors. As a coastal state, New Jersey is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of global climate change, and the United States government has an obligation to protect the citizens of this State. Particularly at a time when the rest of the world is investing in new and cleaner energy, the United States should be focusing on how to grow a new energy sector instead of exposing its citizens to the risks posed by offshore drilling.