



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

BILL NELSON
FLORIDA

January 10, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

It is my understanding that just one day after publishing a new five-year drilling plan in the Federal Register, you have now announced that you are altering that plan to take Florida “off the table.”

If that’s correct, it would seem that the public is now being asked to comment on a plan that is vastly different than the plan Interior is actually considering. The public has a right to know exactly what Interior’s plan is, and it is unreasonable to expect Floridians to provide input on a plan that may or may not be the plan that your agency is actually considering.

Therefore, I ask that you immediately provide answers to the following questions:

- Is the plan published in the Federal Register Monday the current plan being considered by the Interior Department?
- If not, please provide specific details on your agency’s revised plan that takes Florida “off the table.”
- If there is a new revised plan that takes Florida “off the table”, does it:
 - Maintain the current moratorium in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico beyond 2022?
 - Prohibit drilling in the Straits of Florida and off Florida’s Atlantic Coast?
 - Prohibit seismic testing in the areas mentioned above?
- Will your agency be issuing a revised map noting which areas are now excluded from consideration for drilling?
- Does this announcement indicate your agency is now also rejecting seismic permit applications in these areas?
- In regards to your statement that you are “removing Florida from consideration for any new oil and gas platforms,” does this mean your agency is planning to allow drilling off Florida’s coast as long as the platforms themselves are located just west of the Military Mission Line?
- Will you recommend to President Trump that these coastal areas are withdrawn from the offshore oil and gas leasing program?

Please provide complete answers to these important questions by the end of the week. In the meantime, I strongly urge you to extend the public comment period for the draft five-year plan so that Floridians know exactly what's being proposed and have a fair opportunity to convey their position.

I have fought to keep drilling away from Florida's coasts for decades now. This is a very serious issue for the people of Florida, and I hope that you will treat it as such by providing answers to the above questions immediately.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Nelson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.