

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 27, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We appreciate your commitment to unifying our country and tackling the most pressing problems facing our country, notably the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. However, we write to express our concern and opposition to Department of the Interior Acting Secretary Scott de la Vega's Order No. 3395, which, according to media reports, is a precursor to more problematic action regarding a permanent ban on responsible oil and gas leasing in federal waters and on federal lands.

Order 3395 removes traditional decision-making authority from agency and bureau experts who are vested with ensuring compliance with critical statutory authorities, including environmental protections. This order is inconsistent with the federal government's mandate of multiple-use and sustained yields.

Media reports indicate that the Administration plans to announce a new proposal to ban responsible energy leasing, including oil and gas leasing, from our federal waters and lands indefinitely. A federal ban for any period of time will certainly imperil hundreds of thousands of jobs, entire communities, and billions of dollars in royalty revenues to the Federal Treasury and eliminate funding for important conservation programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).

The Interior directive, as reported by media outlets, appears to be the first in at least two new department-wide actions towards a new policy of banning oil and gas development in federal waters and on federal lands. A study by OnLocation Inc.¹ suggest that such a policy would have far-reaching negative consequences, including:

- Near-term loss of potentially one million jobs;
- A cumulative decrease in U.S. GDP by \$700 billion;
- Loss of one of the most significant sources of federal revenue;
- Loss of a major source of revenue for programs like LWCF and individual states;

¹ "The Consequences of a Leasing and Development Ban on Federal Lands and Waters," OnLocation, Inc. September 2020,
https://www.api.org/~media/Files/News/2020/09/Consequences_of_a_Leasing_and_Development_Ban_on_Federal_Lands_and_Waters.pdf

- Net increase of crude imports by two million barrels per day from foreign countries, weakening U.S. energy and national security and increasing our dependence to others;
- Reduction in critical energy supplies for Americans; and,
- Legal implications from the Interior Department's failure to meet statutory requirements to hold lease sales.

Additionally, New Mexico, a small, poor state that receives a huge portion of their revenue for things like funding Albuquerque schools, will find this rule devastating. Such a rule could also tighten supplies, send heating and cooling bills up, and cause a spike in fuel prices during a pandemic. Furthermore, this benefits Big Oil over small independents that did not have the resources to stockpile permits. We should instead work to make sure we create jobs by hiring more inspectors to make sure methane emissions at the well head and other rules that allow for cleaner extraction are taking place.

As the United States works to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, which has killed more than 400,000 Americans and destroyed the livelihoods of many more, now is not the time to jeopardize American jobs, or the critical tax and royalty revenues that federal leases generate for local, state, and federal government that need funds now. Instead, we should invest in our nation's infrastructure and create the jobs that will help our nation emerge stronger after this pandemic. We were pleased to see your Administration rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement on Day 1, and we want to work with you on your Build Back Better agenda.

We urge you to rescind this order and to reject policies that would ban responsible oil and gas leasing on federal lands and federal waters. We are eager to work together to develop sound, informed policy that strengthens the economy, secures jobs for Americans and protects our environment. American families rely upon secure, safe and affordable energy supplies and constituents in our districts are depending on government working proactively to move forward together in 2021 as we build back better. We are ready to do so, and look forward to working with your administration.

Sincerely,



Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress



Lizzie Fletcher
Member of Congress



Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress



Marc Veasey
Member of Congress