

September 20, 2016

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and our millions of members and activists, we thank you for your strong leadership in the fight against climate change. We urge you to build on the unprecedented progress you have already made, by exercising your statutory authority to withdraw the U.S. Arctic and Atlantic oceans permanently from all future oil and gas leasing.

You were instrumental in creating global consensus in Paris this past December that the world must pursue a comprehensive strategy to greatly hasten the transition to a climate-safe future. That strategy needs to address the sourcing of fossil fuels as well as the demand for them, to accelerate adoption of clean energy solutions, signal investors and other countries where U.S. policy is headed, and reduce lock-in of fossil fuel infrastructure. As you know, to avoid the worst impacts of climate disruption, we must not burn the large majority of already-proven global reserves, let alone unproven resources like what may be in the Arctic or Atlantic oceans.

The U.S. is already at the forefront in developing clean, renewable energy. The world also needs leadership on policies that help limit global warming by addressing fossil fuel supply. The place to begin is our publicly-owned lands and waters, held in trust for the good of all. And the time is now: already leased federal fossil fuels, if all extracted and burned at current rates, would last well beyond the point when net carbon pollution must cease to meet limits in the Paris Agreement.

As an urgent start on dealing with that vast over-supply, we need to ensure the industry does not dig this dirty energy hole any deeper by opening up as-yet undeveloped areas. The Arctic and Atlantic oceans present a key opportunity for you to complete major first steps on this front before leaving office. No existing oil drilling jobs are at stake. The current lack of infrastructure for drilling either oceans' outer continental shelves means oil production—if feasible at all—would be decades away, arriving too late to fuel America's transition to a low carbon economy. It would also require massive public and private investments that should instead go into clean energy.

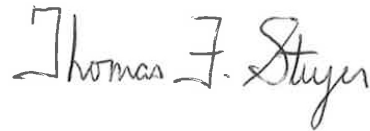
This progress reconciling U.S. energy and climate policy would also contribute to the ultimate goal of transitioning regions where extraction is already occurring, like the Gulf of Mexico, away from dependence on the fossil fuel industry—while protecting impacted local communities.

Your dedication to combating climate disruption has given this and future generations a fighting chance. Clear presidential authority exists for you to add to those historic achievements by withdrawing our Arctic and Atlantic oceans from eligibility for all future oil and gas leasing. Please seize this opportunity to begin the necessary process of moving the federal government out of the dirty oil business—taking Arctic and Atlantic ocean drilling off the table forever.

Sincerely,



Rhea Suh
President
Natural Resources Defense Council



Tom Steyer
President
NextGen Climate



Gene Karpinski
President
League of Conservation Voters



Trip Van Noppen
President
Earthjustice



Michael Brune
Executive Director
Sierra Club



Margie Alt
Executive Director
Environment America



Jamie Rappaport Clark
President
Defenders of Wildlife