

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 23, 2006

The Honorable Gale Norton  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Interior  
1849 C Street, Northwest  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Norton:

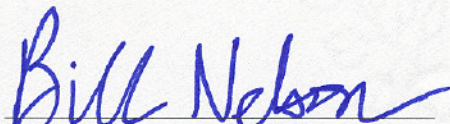
On January 3, 2006, the Department of the Interior published an administrative act in the *Federal Register* that redraws the Federal Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) offshore administrative boundaries. We strongly believe that these boundary changes were of such great importance that this matter should have been addressed in an open manner.

Specifically, this administrative act would allow Alabama and Louisiana to have a greater say over energy-related activities in Lease Sale Area 181, an area in the Gulf of Mexico where drilling is currently prohibited. As you know, this area, which covers nearly 6 million acres, has been at the center of the discussion regarding offshore drilling. Activities in this area have been of special interest to Floridians because of its proximity to the state. The northeastern part of the Lease Sale 181, an area commonly referred to as the "stovepipe," comes within 16 miles of Pensacola's beaches.

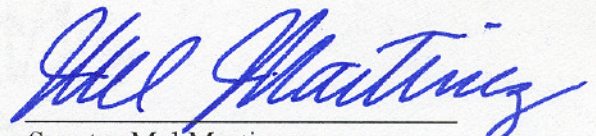
While the long term effects of this change remain unclear, we are concerned that this is yet another attempt to undermine Florida's ability to control activities off of its own coast, including offshore oil and gas drilling. Anytime such changes are being considered, decision makers should be made aware of the full impact of such a proposal, including how it will affect our environment, economy and national security. Unfortunately, this administrative boundary change was published with no notice and no opportunity for public comment.

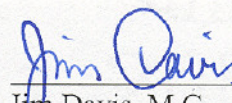
Rest assured, we will continue working together, using what ever means necessary, to ensure that Florida maintains control of offshore activities near our coast. Furthermore, we hope that in the future, the Department of Interior will consult with us and give the people most affected by its decisions an opportunity to comment.

Thank you for your consideration in this manner.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Senator Bill Nelson

Sincerely,

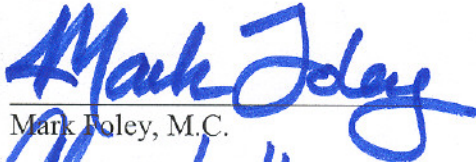
  
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Senator Mel Martinez

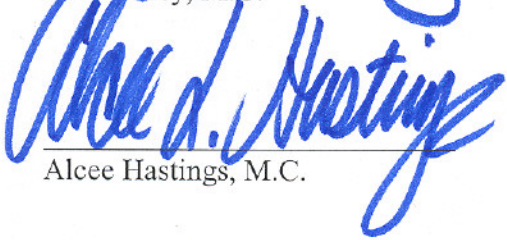
  
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Jim Davis, M.C.

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Mark Foley, M.C.

  
Alcee Hastings, M.C.

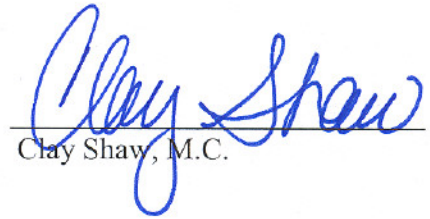
  
Ginny Brown-Waite, M.C.

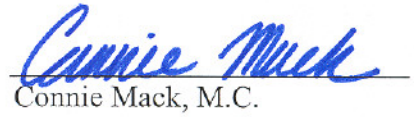
  
Robert Wexler, M.C.

  
Debbie Wasserman Schultz, M.C.

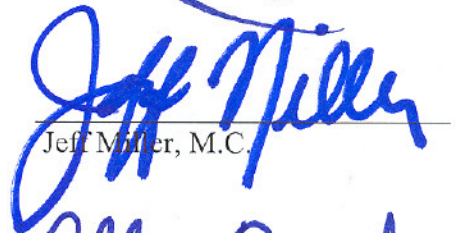
  
Michael Bilirakis, M.C.

  
Corrine Brown, M.C.

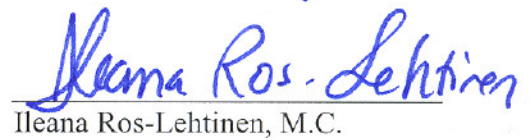
  
Clay Shaw, M.C.

  
Connie Mack, M.C.

  
Katherine Harris, M.C.

  
Jeff Miller, M.C.

  
Allen Boyd, M.C.

  
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, M.C.