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**Congress of the United States**  
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February 9, 2012

Speaker John Boehner  
H-232, US Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Transportation Reauthorization bill: Rewrite Necessary to Protect Florida's Economy - Proposed Expansion of Oil Drilling in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico Abrogates Existing Law

Dear Speaker Boehner:

H.R. 7, the Transportation Reauthorization bill and its companion H.R. 3410, the Energy Security and Transportation Jobs Act are problematic for many reasons. One of the most harmful and troubling provisions would "gut" the 125-mile buffer off the west coast of the State of Florida that was instituted in 2006 as a compromise agreement in the Gulf of Mexico Energy and Security Act ("GOMESA"). The "buffer" or "moratorium" on drilling in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico is vital to the protection of Florida's economy and the missions of Panhandle military bases. The Transportation bill would permit oil rigs to be erected within miles of Florida's beautiful shoreline. Such policy would have dire consequences for jobs, tourism, fishing, and related businesses and is an affront to the citizens of Florida while the havoc of the BP Deepwater Horizon blowout is still fresh in our minds. I urge you to remove the harmful provisions and protect the economy of my home State of Florida and prevent the expansion of offshore oil drilling in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico.

Florida is different from other states in the Gulf Coast region because our economy is based upon thriving tourism and fishing businesses. We have not industrialized our coastline. The BP Oil Disaster was a stark reminder that Florida's long-term economic health is dependent upon clean water and clean beaches. The BP Oil Disaster – the largest oil spill in U.S. history – killed eleven workers and uncontrollably spewed almost five million barrels of oil into the Gulf of Mexico for three months, devastating our already fragile economy. The BP Deepwater Horizon explosion occurred 300 miles off the coast of West Central Florida, yet it is estimated to cost Florida \$2.2 billion and almost 40,000 jobs. Small businesses in the tourism industry were immediately affected by the disaster, even in cities and counties hundreds of miles away from the furthest extent of the oiled beaches. The perception was enough to scare off potential visitors. The food, beverage and lodging industries saw significant decline in sales, along with retail stores and the fishing industry. Florida's slow economic recovery came to a screeching halt. The minimal revenue generated from opening new oil drilling leases in the Eastern Gulf pales in comparison to the cost of lost revenue and jobs to the state of Florida. So while an appropriately

written transportation bill would provide an opportunity to create jobs and economic opportunities for our neighbors, the inclusion of Eastern Gulf oil drilling actually puts millions of jobs at risk and the economy of the State of Florida in great peril.

The Congressional Budget Office determined recently that the potential proceeds from the proposed drilling in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico would result in receipts totaling about \$100 million. Compare that with the over eighty million tourists who visited Florida in 2010 and spent over \$62.7 billion, generating twenty-two percent of the state's sales tax revenue and employing nearly one million people. Fish and wildlife-related activities in Florida generate \$15 billion a year and employ 141,373 people, while boating activities account for \$17 billion and 203,000 jobs. Wildlife viewing alone accounts for \$5.6 billion and 51,367 jobs in Florida. Florida's Gulf Coast ports account for \$10.6 billion per year and support 125,000 direct and indirect jobs. Florida's Gulf Coast provides significant conservation lands and economic security benefits to the state and nation. Statewide, defense-related spending was \$64.8 billion in 2010 and accounted for 686,181 jobs. As you can see, it makes absolutely no sense to put over \$175 billion in economic benefits and over 2.2 million Floridians' jobs at risk for \$100 million in oil revenue.

Furthermore, no one should be confused that robust domestic oil production is not underway today in the Gulf. Over 8.3 million acres in the eastern Gulf were opened to additional drilling under the bipartisan GOMESA. These vast new swaths of deepwater areas outside of the Loop Current are open to leasing. These areas represent a strong commitment to ensuring a steady supply, while still protecting the tourism and fishing economies of the State of Florida. As part of the agreement it was clear that the areas withdrawn from leasing have important environmental, economic and military functions.

The justification for continuing the 125-mile buffer and the 2006 agreement are even clearer now following the 2010 BP Oil Disaster. The BP Oil Disaster wreaked havoc on our tourism-based economy while GOMESA was still in effect. Dismantling GOMESA and expanding offshore drilling closer to Florida's coast would have catastrophic effects on Florida's economy and jobs. The GOMESA agreement expanded drilling in a way that recognized the energy challenges faced by our nation, but balanced them against the vital environmental, economic and military interests of Floridians. It expanded energy production while preserving our natural treasures for the next generation, and allowing the military to continue to keep our country safe. For these reasons, I strongly urge that the Transportation bill be amended to protect Florida's economy and jobs and that any new energy policies leave GOMESA intact.

Sincerely,



Kathy Castor  
U.S. Representative  
Florida – District 11

Cc: Florida Congressional Delegation