

SUPPORT SB 795 / HB 706 and SJ 56 / HJ 61: Protect Virginia's Coast from Offshore Drilling

Patrons: Senator Lewis, Delegate Keam, Delegate Guy

Drilling for oil and gas off Virginia's coast is not worth the risk:

- Home to the world's largest Navy base, Virginia's open waters off the coast provide critical space for training. Both the Department of Defense and NASA have expressed concerns about drilling off our coast.
- Tourism is a booming industry in Virginia—generating nearly \$25 billion in revenue and supporting 232,000 jobs statewide in 2017. Drilling off Virginia's coast threatens 48,000 coastal tourism jobs and \$1.1 billion in salaries from tourism.
- Virginia is the largest seafood producer on the east coast and the third largest in the US. Virginia's 50 commercial fisheries and \$50 million oyster and clam aquaculture industry should not be jeopardized.
- 25 Virginia localities and the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission have expressed their opposition to drilling off Virginia's coast including: Accomack County, Cape Charles, Chesapeake, Chincoteague, Exmore, Hampton, Isle of Wight County, James City County, Middlesex County, Montross, Newport News, Norfolk, Northampton County, Onancock, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Urbanna, Virginia Beach, and Williamsburg.
- The Commonwealth of Virginia is on record with the Federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management requesting removal from the federal Oil and Gas Leasing Program. This bill aligns with the Commonwealth's position and protects Virginia's coastal economies.

SB 795 / HB 706 does three important things:

- Removes outdated language from the code that expresses the Commonwealth's support of offshore drilling—Virginia is officially on record requesting removal from the federal government's drilling plan.
- Protects Virginia's coastal economies and environment from the near-shore activities that specifically accompany the offshore oil and gas industry by prohibiting infrastructure in Virginia's coastal waters from those federal activities.
- Amends the code section pertaining to any potential future royalty payments to state expressly that such provision is not an endorsement by the Commonwealth of offshore oil and gas activity.

SJ 56 / HJ 61 does two important things:

- Opposes exploration and drilling for oil and gas off the coast of Virginia, highlighting many of the key concerns.
- Transmits a copy of the Resolution to the U.S. Department of the Interior.