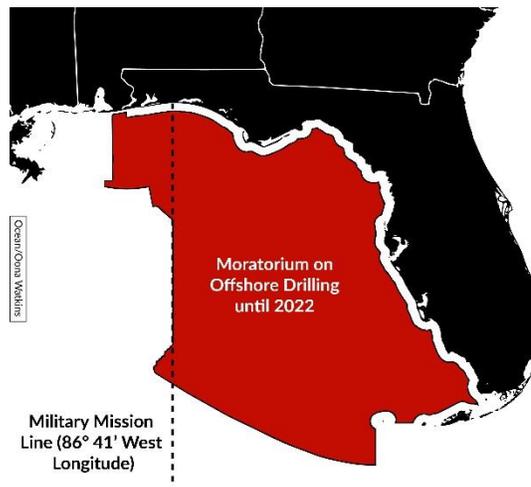


Congress: Protect Military Readiness and Florida's Coast from Offshore Drilling in the National Defense Authorization Act

In 2006, Congress enacted the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA) to prevent oil and gas leasing in most of the eastern and a portion of the central Gulf of Mexico.¹ GOMESA prohibited offshore drilling in these areas (shown in red) to protect the largest military training range in the continental U.S. from oil and gas encroachment. Protecting this area from offshore drilling preserves unconstrained military training and testing activities that are essential to U.S. national security.² While the law protects these Gulf waters from oil and gas activities today, it is set to expire in 2022.³ Congress needs to permanently extend the moratorium to protect this invaluable military asset and keep offshore drilling from coming any closer to Florida's coastal communities.



A permanent moratorium is in Florida's best interest.

Allowing offshore drilling even closer to Florida is fundamentally at odds with the coastal communities, economies and ecosystems already thriving there. Oil-free beaches and healthy ocean environments fuel booming tourism, fishing and recreation industries, which together underpin Florida's Gulf Coast economy. Throughout Florida, expanded offshore drilling threatens nearly 610,000 jobs and roughly \$37.4 billion in GDP.⁴ Investing in dirty and dangerous oil development at the expense of existing ocean-dependent jobs is a shortsighted mistake.

Further, new oil and gas activities threaten existing military training and testing operations throughout the region. Keeping the eastern Gulf of Mexico free of oil leasing, exploration and drilling activities will ensure that vital military readiness activities can continue securely and without interference while also protecting the environment from oil spills. The vast expanse of the Gulf Test Range – larger than all other training ranges in the continental U.S. combined – along with numerous adjacent military installations, make up a critical national asset.⁵

Failure to extend the current moratorium would limit activities critical to national security, such as weapons testing systems and combat training. Without this, Florida could lose the primary reason to host its 20 military installations along with the economic boost these bases generate.⁶ In 2018, defense spending in the state generated \$95 billion in total economic impacts and contributed to nearly 915,000 jobs.⁷ Unhindered military access to the eastern Gulf of Mexico is crucial to maintaining the long-term prospects of this industry and the jobs it supports throughout Florida.

A permanent moratorium preserves military training ranges and prevents encroachment.

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which authorizes funding for Department of Defense programs and activities, is the perfect vehicle for establishing a permanent moratorium on oil and gas leasing in the eastern Gulf of Mexico. We urge Congress to preserve this important military asset by permanently extending the offshore drilling moratorium in the FY2021 NDAA. A permanent moratorium is necessary to ensure vital military operations can continue uninterrupted, while also protecting Florida's economy and coastal communities from the risks of offshore drilling. Action this year through the NDAA is critical to safeguarding Florida's Gulf Coast and military readiness from oil and gas encroachment.

Congress should enact a permanent offshore drilling moratorium for Florida's Gulf Coast to ensure dangerous drilling cannot get an inch closer to Florida.

Sources:

- ¹ 43 USC 1331. Sec. 104. Moratorium on Oil and Gas Leasing in Certain Areas of Gulf of Mexico. *Gulf of Mexico Energy Security*. Available: https://www.boem.gov/uploadedFiles/BOEM/Oil_and_Gas_Energy_Program/Energy_Economics/Revenue_Sharing/GOMESA.pdf
- ² Department of Defense (2018) Preserving Military Readiness in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico. Available: <http://www.iadc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/DOD-Offshore-Report.pdf>
- ³ 43 USC 1331. Sec. 104. Moratorium on Oil and Gas Leasing in Certain Areas of Gulf of Mexico. *Gulf of Mexico Energy Security*. Available: https://www.boem.gov/uploadedFiles/BOEM/Oil_and_Gas_Energy_Program/Energy_Economics/Revenue_Sharing/GOMESA.pdf
- ⁴ Oceana (2018) Clean Coast Economy. Available: http://usa.oceana.org/sites/default/files/4046/florida_updated.pdf
- ⁵ Florida Defense Support Task Force (2017) Oil Drilling & Military Mission Compatibility In the Gulf of Mexico. *Enterprise Florida, Inc.* Available: <http://usa.oceana.org/sites/default/files/662/fdstf-white-paper-oil-drilling-and-military-mission-compatibility.pdf>
- ⁶ Florida Defense Support Task Force (2017) Oil Drilling & Military Mission Compatibility In the Gulf of Mexico. *Enterprise Florida, Inc.* Available: <http://usa.oceana.org/sites/default/files/662/fdstf-white-paper-oil-drilling-and-military-mission-compatibility.pdf>
- ⁷ Enterprise Florida and Florida Defense Support Task Force (2020) Florida Defense Industry Economic Impact Analysis. Available: https://www.enterpriseflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/Florida-Defense-Industry-Economic-Impact-Assessment_2020-FINAL.pdf