



County of Monterey

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Clerk of the Board
168 West Alisal St. 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901
831 755 5066
cob@co.monterey.ca.us

March 11, 2024

The Honorable Jimmy Panetta
304 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: H.R. 470, the West Coast Ocean Protection Act of 2023 – Support

Dear Congressman Panetta:

On behalf of the County of Monterey, I am writing to express our support for the West Coast Ocean Protection Act of 2023 (H.R. 470).

As you know, California began efforts to block offshore drilling in 1969 when an oil rig off the coast of Santa Barbara leaked 3 million gallons of crude oil into the ocean, blanketing beaches with a thick layer of oil and killing thousands of marine mammals and birds. It was the largest oil spill in U.S. history until the Exxon Valdez spill 20 years later. After the 1969 Santa Barbara spill, California blocked all new offshore oil drilling in state waters, protecting our coastal waters up to three miles from the shore. The state reinforced that ban in 1994 by passing the California Coastal Sanctuary Act, which prohibited new leasing in state waters.

In October 2021, a ruptured pipeline from an existing oil well spilled more than 25,000 gallons of crude oil into the ocean and onto the beaches of Orange County. Despite numerous alarms, operators allowed oil to flow from the leak for over 14 hours. The spill covered more than 8,000 acres of the ocean's surface and required more than a week of cleanup while local businesses and fisheries suffered.

No new offshore drilling has been allowed in federal waters along the Pacific Coast since 1984. However, there was a proposal in 2018 to open up the entire West Coast to new drilling. That proposal was blocked by the courts but the threat of drilling will remain until a permanent ban is enacted. The West Coast Ocean Protection Act would permanently protect these waters that are essential to coastal economies and healthy marine ecosystems. Nearly 70% of Californians opposed offshore drilling according to recent polling by the Public Policy Institute of California.

We appreciate your continued support for Monterey County, and we thank you for co-sponsoring H.R. 470, the West Coast Ocean Protection Act of 2023.

Sincerely,

Glenn Church, Chair
Board of Supervisors

cc: The Honorable Zoe Lofgren, 18th Congressional District

