

Dear Secretary Haaland:

As a former commander in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, I wanted to thank you for the opportunity to put forth my comment to help inform Interior's interim report on the issue of the Federal Oil and Gas Program, as I believe my background and perspective is important to the conversation.

My primary concern is the impact the federal leasing ban will have on our country's national security, as a result of increased reliance on countries like Russia and Saudi Arabia for our energy needs. If recent incidents in the Suez Canal have taught us anything, it is the fragility of energy security and the importance of energy independence.

Should the Biden administration decide to move forward on the federal leasing ban, our imports from foreign sources have the potential to increase by 2 million barrels a day and spend \$500 billion more on energy from foreign suppliers by 2030, according to an [analysis](#) last year. This would put our country at a severe disadvantage and leave the United States vulnerable to supply shortages from adversarial nations.

Another detrimental impact of the ban is the effect on jobs in our country, as the same analysis predicts the potential of nearly 1 million jobs lost by 2022, in top producing states including your home state of New Mexico, Utah, Colorado and Wyoming. Now is not the time to put good paying oil and gas jobs at risk, while our country continues to rebound from the economic downturn brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, I would like to highlight a 2016 [report](#) from the Obama administration's Department of Interior which concluded that "America's greenhouse gas emissions will be little affected by leasing decisions and could, in fact, increase slightly in the absence of new U.S. Outer Continental Shelf leasing." The report further states, "Foreign sources of oil will substitute for reduced OCS supply, and the production and transport of that foreign oil would emit more GHGs." In addition, by decreasing our usage of natural gas, the United States could revert back to its reliance on coal and other less clean forms of energy, which would also have a negative impact on emissions.

The United Nations [Emissions Gap Report 2020](#) recently found that the United States has made the most progress of any major economy in reducing its carbon footprint. The report noted that while greenhouse gas emissions per capita continue to rise in China, India, and Russia, emissions in the United States have dropped on average 0.4% annually over the last ten years. If the Biden administration's mission is to continue reducing our country's carbon footprint, relying on other countries such as Russia and India for our energy needs is the wrong path forward in meeting our climate goals.

The United States is a global leader in energy and halting new oil and gas development on federally owned lands will cause us to forfeit that position and allow OPEC, Russia and Middle Eastern countries to rush in and fill the void. As a Nation, we have had energy security and independence as critical goals for decades. Now that we have obtained this position, it is no time to forfeit these advantages.

Madam Secretary, as a Commander in the Army Corps of Engineers, I have had to make decisions that balance the needs of the Nation and impact on our Environment. It is possible to make decisions that advance the considerations for both. I invite you to please reconsider the moratorium on oil and gas leases on federal lands, as it is critical to our allies abroad and our country's domestic energy security at home.

Sincerely,
Tom Magness
U.S. Army colonel, retired
Former Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers