

US NEWS

Trump Admin Approves Offshore Oil Drilling in Areas Off Florida, California, Alaska Coastlines

The move breaks decades of precedent on the federal government's policies regarding offshore drilling leases near Florida and California.



An oil platform off the coast of Huntington Beach, Calif., on Jan. 29, 2023. John Fredricks/The Epoch Times



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The Trump administration announced on Nov. 20 that it was approving new oil drilling leases off the coasts of California

approving new oil drilling leases off the coasts of California, Florida, and Alaska, as President Donald Trump seeks to surge U.S. oil production to reduce energy costs.

The Department of the Interior [stated](#) on Nov. 20 that Interior Secretary Doug Burgum had signed an [order](#), “Unleashing American Offshore Energy,” directing the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to take steps to terminate President Joe Biden’s 2024–2029 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program.

The order will replace it with Burgum’s 11th National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program, which, among other actions, proposes up to 34 potential offshore lease sales throughout 21 areas off the coast of Alaska, seven in the Gulf near Florida, and six along the California coast.

“By moving forward with the development of a robust, forward-thinking leasing plan, we are ensuring that America’s offshore industry stays strong, our workers stay employed, and our nation remains energy dominant for decades to come,” Burgum said in a [statement](#).

The move, which was met with immediate opposition from Democrats and environmental advocates, breaks with decades of precedent over oil drilling waters near California and Florida, where oil spills remain a concern for residents and local politicians.

While California possesses some offshore oil rigs, no new oil drilling leases have been issued in its federal waters since the mid-1980s. Since 1995, the federal government has blocked oil drilling in federal waters off of Florida and portions of Alabama over concerns of oil spills.

Burgum’s plan calls for new drilling off Florida’s Gulf Coast in locations at least 100 miles from the shore adjacent to an area in

locations at least 100 miles from the shore, adjacent to an area in the Central Gulf that already has thousands of wells and hundreds of drilling sites.

On Nov. 11, when The Washington Post reported that Trump administration officials were planning new oil drilling leases off California's coast for the first time in decades, California Gov. Gavin Newsom, a Democrat, [called](#) the initiative "dead on arrival."

Democratic lawmakers, including Sen. Alex Padilla (D-Calif.) and Rep. Jared Huffman (D-Calif.), who is the top Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee, issued a [joint statement](#) on Nov. 20 criticizing the Trump administration's plans.

"With this draft plan, Donald Trump and his Administration are trying to destroy one of the most valuable, most protected coastlines in the world and hand it over to the fossil fuel industry," Padilla and Huffman wrote. "These lease areas are not only irreplaceable, but allowing drilling in these areas would undermine military readiness and pose risks to national security."

Joseph Gordon, campaign director of the environmental group Oceana, called the Trump administration's plan an "oil spill nightmare."

"The last thing America needs now is a massive expansion of offshore drilling that could shut down our shores with catastrophic oil spills," he said in a [statement](#). "The Atlantic Coast will thankfully be spared, but this dangerous proposal to still sell off millions of acres of our oceans is a betrayal of the bipartisan voices—including U.S. lawmakers, business leaders, and the people who live along these coasts—who oppose more offshore drilling."

Sen. Rick Scott (R-Fla.), a top Senate Republican, had persuaded the first Trump administration to back away from a similar offshore drilling plan in 2018 when he was still governor. Earlier

this month, Scott co-sponsored a bill with fellow Florida Republican Sen. Ashley Moody (R-Fla.) that would maintain a moratorium on offshore drilling in the state that Trump signed during his first term.

“As Floridians, we know how vital our beautiful beaches and coastal waters are to our state’s economy, environment, and way of life. It’s why I have fought for years to keep drilling off Florida’s coasts and worked closely with President Trump during his first term to ensure they remain protected with the president’s moratorium, which bans oil drilling through 2032,” Scott said in a Nov. 3 [statement](#).

“I will always work to keep Florida’s shores pristine and protect our natural treasures for generations to come.”

The American Petroleum Institute [called](#) Trump’s drilling plan a “historic step toward unleashing our nation’s vast offshore resources.”

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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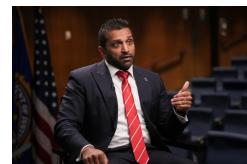
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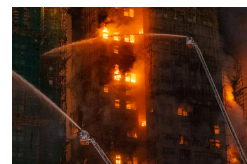
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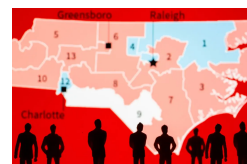
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