

**COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES**

**Oversight Hearing on  
“The Minerals Management Service’s 2007-2012 Program for Oil and Gas Leasing  
on the Outer Continental Shelf”**

**June 28, 2007**

**Statement of Rep. Thelma Drake (VA-02)**

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Good Morning Chairman Costa, Ranking Member Pearce and other Members of the Subcommittee.

As a former member of this Subcommittee, it is a great honor for me to be sitting here on the other side of the dais to speak about an issue of great importance to the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Americans are paying too much to heat their homes, fuel their cars, and run their businesses. Energy costs in the United States have skyrocketed and our dependence on foreign sources of energy is placing our economy and national security at risk. The increased global demand for energy by emerging economies such as China and India will only further drive up the cost for American businesses and families in the future. As a result, many steps need to be taken today to stabilize energy prices and liberate our nation’s dependence on volatile oil- and gas-rich nations. One such step is tapping our vast domestic resources – such as those lying in the Outer Continent Shelf (OCS).

The Minerals Management Service’s 5-year plan for the OCS provides such a step forward. For far too long, the OCS in the Atlantic has been locked up. While our oil and gas prices have seen a steady increase, our options in providing a solution to our citizens have been limited. However, the new MMS 5-year plan has broken those chains and has given back hope to a nation that remains hostage to foreign sources of energy.

Including Virginia in the 5-year plan will provide valuable answers to such questions as how much of a resource is off the coast, where these energy resources are located, and the challenges of harvesting these resources. It would be short-sighted not to seek these answers as I believe the majority of Americans would agree that these are much needed steps if we are to achieve true energy independence. I believe the MMS 5-year plan will provide the insight that the federal government and the Commonwealth of Virginia are seeking as both entities explore real solutions to our ever-increasing energy problems.

It is noteworthy that the inclusion of Virginia in the 5-year plan was a result of the expressed intent of the people of the Commonwealth. In 2006, the Virginia General Assembly, under the leadership of Senator Frank Wagner, passed a comprehensive energy plan that included the desire to drill off the coast of Virginia. More recently, this past year Governor Tim Kaine expressed his interest to MMS for this to occur as well. I

must stress that the support of the Commonwealth of Virginia came only after the conclusion was drawn that there were appropriate environmental safeguards and distance from shore.

While I am pleased to see Virginia's inclusion in the 5-year plan, I must admit that I am dismayed by the map the MMS has adopted to establish the federal OCS offshore administrative boundaries which determine OCS state adjacent administrative zones. These boundaries, as they are currently drawn, do not accurately reflect the relative boundaries of states and furthermore penalize states, such as Virginia, with concave coastlines and result in grossly unfair zoning. This inequity affects all of the Commonwealth's activities in the ocean including sand and gravel dredging, mariculture, and offshore renewable energy projects involving wind, waves and currents.

Before I conclude, I must say that I support the increased use of renewable energy projects in this country. The energy policy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century cannot rely solely on traditional sources of energy; therefore, renewable energy sources must play a key role in any long-term solution to our nation's energy needs. That being said, the reality is that all of the renewable energy we produce today would not solely keep the lights running, our homes heated and cooled and our cars functioning. As a result, we must allow MMS to research and thoroughly investigate what domestic assets of natural gas are contained off the coast of Virginia while continuing to approve policies that look to renewable energy to help meet the needs of the future.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to be here today to speak about such an important issue for our nation and for the Commonwealth of Virginia.