

SENATE THIRD READING
SJR 12 (Laird)
As Amended March 16, 2026
Majority vote

SUMMARY

Declares the Legislature's strong and unequivocal opposition to the proposed leasing of federal lands offshore California for oil and gas development given the risks to coastal resources, recreation and economy, and the Legislature's commitment to take action to maintain the existing prohibition on new federal leasing.

Major Provisions

- 1) Resolves that the Legislature considers new oil and gas offshore drilling to be a threat to the nation's and the state's ocean environment and wildlife, ancestral lands and waters of California Native American tribes, marine and coastal economy, national security, and the well-being of all Californians, and that it is inconsistent with the state's ambitious renewable energy goals.
- 2) Requests BOEM to hold public hearings on the proposed leasing plan in California.
- 3) Requests BOEM to prepare a programmatic environmental impact statement to accompany the 2026–2031 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program.
- 4) Requests BOEM to prepare an environmental impact statement to accompany the 2026–2031 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program and provide the public the opportunity to comment on a draft programmatic environmental impact statement for potential offshore oil and gas leasing in California.
- 5) Resolves that the Legislature strongly and unequivocally opposes any new offshore drilling, including the federal government's proposed leasing plan, which would expose the entire California coast to new offshore drilling and the accompanying risks to coastal environment, fishing, tourism, and recreation from an oil spill, and urges the United States (U.S.) Secretary of the Interior to remove California from the plan.
- 6) Resolves that the Legislature declares unequivocal support for the current federal prohibition on new oil or gas drilling in federal waters offshore of the Pacific coast, its opposition to the proposed five-year National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program or any attempts to modify that prohibition, and its determination to consider any appropriate actions to maintain the current prohibition.

COMMENTS

- 1) *State moratorium on offshore oil drilling.* Since 1938, SLC has had jurisdiction over the leasing of oil and gas from offshore state lands. Between 1938 and 1968, more than 50 offshore oil and gas leases were issued by SLC. Under standard protocol, the leases that SLC issued were either devoid of a fixed end date or were subsequently amended to remove an end date. The lease terms typically provide that the leases last as long as oil and gas is being produced in paying or commercial quantities. When production ceases, a lease is

quitclaimed back to SLC once the infrastructure has been removed and the lease terms satisfied.

SLC established a moratorium on new offshore oil and gas leases after the 1969 oil spill in Santa Barbara, though ten of those leases issued before 1969 continue operations.

In 1994, the California Legislature enacted AB 2444 (O'Connell), Chapter 970, Statutes of 1994, establishing the California Coastal Sanctuary Act of 1994. This Act placed the entire coast from the Mexican border north to the California-Oregon border in a permanent sanctuary, except for those offshore lands subject to a lease for the extraction of oil or gas in effect on January 1, 1995, and those waters in the Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta east of the Carquinez Bridges.

In 2018, California enacted SB 834 (Jackson), Chapter 309, Statutes of 2018, and AB 1775 (Muratsuchi), Chapter 310, Statutes of 2018, to prohibit SLC from entering into any new lease or other conveyance authorizing new construction of oil- and gas-related infrastructure on tidelands and submerged lands within state waters associated with Pacific Outer Continental Shelf leases issued after January 1, 2018.

Generally, state lands extend three miles from the coast; beyond this distance is under federal jurisdiction. The federal government imposed a moratorium on new leases in federal waters off California in 1984. In January of 2025, President Biden blocked drilling for oil in more than 625 million acres of U.S. ocean — the entire East Coast and West Coast, the eastern Gulf of Mexico, and a portion of the Bering Sea. President Biden's action prohibited new leases in the identified regions. Courts have found that the federal Offshore Continental Shelf Lands Act allows a president to protect waters indefinitely and doesn't include any explicit provision for *removing* that protection.

- 2) *Trump Administration's proposal for offshore oil drilling.* President Trump signed an executive order on the first day of his second term reversing President Biden's ban on future offshore oil drilling off both U.S. coasts. A federal court subsequently struck down President Biden's order to withdraw federal waters from oil development. In November 2025, the Trump Administration announced new oil drilling off the California and Florida coasts for the first time in decades and proposed six offshore lease sales between 2027 and 2030 in areas along the California coast.

The U.S. Department of the Interior's draft proposed 2026–2031 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program would permit 34 potential offshore lease sales across 1.27 billion acres of federal waters, including 6 new leases across northern, central, and southern California in areas where there have not been any newly executed leases for offshore oil and gas development since the Reagan Administration.

As a result of the conflict in Iran and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, oil prices have skyrocketed, topping \$120 per barrel in May. In early March, to buffer increasing gas prices, President Trump signed an executive order invoking the Defense Production Act (DPA) to override state regulators to increase domestic supply of crude oil into the California market by approximately 17%.

A Center for Biological Diversity analysis¹ predicts that the federal Administration's latest offshore drilling plan could result in up to 886 oil spills off California, releasing roughly 1.9 million gallons of oil on our coast.

BOEM is not preparing an environmental impact statement for preparation of the 2026–2031 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program, unlike it has done for the previous five-year plans, and is not intending to provide the public the opportunity to comment on a draft programmatic environmental impact statement for potential offshore oil and gas leasing in California.

Exacerbating California's carbon neutrality goal challenges, President Trump is paying \$885 million to two energy companies to voluntarily walk away from their BOEM-issued leases for offshore wind off California's coast in exchange for the offshore wind developers making an equal investment to develop U.S. oil and gas assets, energy infrastructure, or liquefied natural gas projects.

- 3) *SJR 12*. This resolution requests that BOEM hold public hearings on the proposed leasing plan and to prepare programmatic environmental impact statements and resolves that the Legislature strongly and unequivocally opposes any new offshore drilling.

According to the Author

California's coast is integral to our environment, economy, and identity. The federal administration's proposed 2026–2031 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program would open up California's coast to new drilling and increase fossil fuel emissions and have devastating impacts on marine ecosystems and coastal communities. Senate Joint Resolution 12 affirms the California Legislature's opposition to the proposed plan and our commitment to protect marine ecosystems, transition to clean energy, and support coastal economies. This resolution makes clear that Californians, as well as leaders across the country, oppose a reckless offshore drilling plan that ignores environmental risks and input from the public.

Arguments in Support

A coalition of supporters state:

Waters off California's more than 3,000 miles of iconic coastline are an invaluable treasure to Californians, supporting globally significant epicenters of biodiversity, multi-billion-dollar fisheries and tourism-dependent businesses, military readiness, and irreplaceable resources of cultural and historical significance. This is why more than 100 municipalities across the West Coast and nearly every coastal county in California have adopted positions opposing any expansion of offshore oil and gas drilling off our state.

Arguments in Opposition

None on file

FISCAL COMMENTS

Nonfiscal

VOTES

SENATE FLOOR: 27-8-5

YES: Allen, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Cortese, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Umberg, Weber Pierson, Wiener

NO: Alvarado-Gil, Choi, Dahle, Grove, Jones, Niello, Seyarto, Valladares

ABS, ABST OR NV: Hurtado, Ochoa Bogh, Reyes, Strickland, Wahab

ASM NATURAL RESOURCES: 9-4-1

YES: Bryan, Connolly, Garcia, Haney, Kalra, Pellerin, Schultz, Wicks, Zbur

NO: Ellis, Alanis, Hoover, Macedo

ABS, ABST OR NV: Muratsuchi

UPDATED

VERSION: March 16, 2026

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FN: 0003157