

**Comments Provided by William R. Cousins
Draft Proposed Plan
for the 5-Year OCS Oil and Gas Leasing Program, 2007-2012
Tallahassee, Florida
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I am a retired U. S. Army colonel with a long term interest in energy issues. One of my positions while on active duty was Director, Alternative Fuels, Defense Energy Supply Center. We studied alternative resources to replace current fossil fuels as well as feasible alternative means to recover known fossil fuel supplies to guarantee our energy requirements for national defense.

I believe there is negligible environmental impact of offshore operations and this is proven by the safety record of the last 50 years. Natural seeps account for 150 to 175 times greater oil in the ocean than offshore drilling and drilling is five times safer than tankers bringing in foreign oil. I believe our major concern is not the environmental safety of drilling in our waters but our reliance on foreign imports. We must reduce imports and become self reliant.

We all recognize that we need to reduce our consumption of fossil fuels and through technology find alternative fuels to meet our needs. Our nation cannot continue in the meantime to rely on unreliable and costly foreign imports.

Despite the stated intentions of several of our nation's leaders over the past 30 years our reliance on foreign suppliers for our fuels has continued to increase at an alarming rate. According to the MMS Web site we currently import a staggering 60 per cent of the oil we need. Our reliance on foreign suppliers for that oil presents two major types of problems, economic and national security.

We are at risk economically when the prices we pay for our fuel are maintained at an artificial high by foreign entities that limit supply rates.

Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 30th indicated that the costs oil imports impose on our economy now total over \$825 billion annually – nearly double the President’s defense budget request for the current fiscal year.

The defense of our nation is at a greater risk and our national security is threatened when these same foreign entities, often hostile to our national objectives, control the tap and can shut off our supplies. There are many who attempt to mitigate this risk by relying on the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to maintain our fuel supplies. The Strategic Petroleum Reserve has a capacity of only 700 million barrels of unrefined product and is historically filled at less than capacity. It is not gasoline we can just pump out of the ground and use; it must be transported to refineries for processing and then distributed where needed. It is only equal to about 59 days of our petroleum imports and is continually threatened by members of Congress who want to use this strategic resource to heat the homes of the poor.

Our nation cannot continue to accept these economic and security risks by remaining dependent on unreliable foreign sources to meet our current energy needs.

I strongly urge opening the Outer Continental Shelf in all areas under consideration in the current Draft Proposed Plan as well as all other areas available to the Minerals Management Service, in order to reduce our foreign dependence on petroleum and ensure the vitality of our economy and the strength of our national security.