

Legislation introduced to permanently protect the Pacific, Atlantic Oceans from offshore drilling

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U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley are co-sponsoring two bills that would permanently protect the Pacific and Atlantic oceans from the environmental and economic costs of fossil fuel drilling off our coastal shores.

Merkley also led a bill to prohibit drilling in the Arctic, which Wyden also co-sponsored.

“The U.S. simply does not need to drill in the coastal waters of the Pacific. We have more than enough clean energy resources without putting Oregon’s outdoor recreation and seafood industries at risk,” Wyden said. “These bills are all about looking out for small businesses that depend on tourism and the fishing industry, rather than capitulating to the ‘oiligarchs’ whose only goal is to fatten their wallets, no matter the environmental and economic toil it could bring to our shores.”

“Offshore drilling guarantees future oil spills with devastating consequences: from oiled beaches to catastrophic damage to tourism, commercial sport fishing, and ocean ecosystems,” Merkley said. “Trump’s Dirty Energy First strategy would see his administration expand offshore drilling—all to enrich billionaire corporate polluters—but Senator Wyden and I are leading the charge to protect the Oregon Coast and beyond from dangerous offshore oil and gas drilling.”

The West Coast Protection Act would permanently prohibit new oil and gas leases for drilling off the coast of California, Oregon, and Washington.

The Clean Ocean and Safe Tourism (COAST) Anti-Drilling Act would permanently prohibit the U.S. Department of the Interior from issuing leases for the exploration, development, or production of oil and gas in the North Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic, and Straits of Florida Planning Areas of the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf.

The Stop Arctic Ocean Drilling Act, led by Merkley, would permanently ban new or renewed leases for oil, gas, or mineral extraction in the Arctic Ocean Planning Areas of the Outer Continental Shelf, protecting one of the planet’s most fragile ecosystems.

This legislation comes following the 15th anniversary of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, which resulted in the deaths of 11 workers, 134 million gallons spilled into the Gulf of Mexico over 87 days, the demise of thousands of marine mammals and sea turtles, and billions of dollars in economic losses from the fishing, outdoor recreation, and tourism industries.

The Pacific west coast economy provides over \$80 Billion in GDP via industries like tourism, outdoor recreation, fishing, retail, and real estate, supporting more than 825,000 jobs. And BAPPC’s 8,100 business members rely on a clean ocean to drive their revenues and provide for their customers, employees and families, according to Grant Bixby, a founding member of The Business Alliance for Protecting the Pacific Coast.

"We strongly support the West Coast Protection Act and other legislation to prohibit new offshore drilling and protect our businesses by prioritizing a healthy coastal ecosystem," Bixby said

In addition to Wyden and Merkley, the West Coast Protection Act is cosponsored by Senators Cory Booker (D-N.J.), Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), Patty Murray (D-Wash.), Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Adam Schiff (D-Calif.), and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.) and led by Senator Alex Padilla (D-Calif.).

The COAST Anti-Drilling Act, led by Senators Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Jack Reed (D-R.I.), is co-sponsored by Wyden and Merkley, along with Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Chris Coons (D-Del.), Angus King (I-Maine), Markey, Sanders, Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), and Whitehouse.

Merkley’s Stop Arctic Ocean Drilling Act was co-sponsored by Markey, Blumenthal, Sanders, and Warren, in addition to Wyden.

