

DRAFT SAMPLE GUEST COLUMN/OP-ED

Florida's beaches and coastlines define and unite us as Floridians. They brought us here, keep us here, and are the places we go to recreate and renew our spirits and souls. A Florida sunset, an open vista view of the Gulf of Mexico, and a lazy day spent floating or fishing in clear beautiful water is the Florida Dream that all of share. Few things are pure Florida the way or beaches and coastlines are. They are too valuable, and to much a part of who we are to risk to offshore drilling.

Offshore drilling is wrong for Florida in numerous ways. By any criteria used to measure its potential negative impact to our coastlines it fails to pass the test of acceptable risk or any provide any benefit that would outweigh the tremendous dangers posed to the economic engines that drive Florida.

The current drilling debate in Florida is about drilling right off our beaches, within state waters just 3-9 miles offshore. Read this again if you need too. Drilling just 3-9 miles off places like Sanibel, Naples, Sarasota, the Keys, the Everglades, Destin, and Cedar Key.

Our economy in Florida is grounded in clean healthy coastlines that are the backbone of our 65 billion dollar a year tourist economy. In the absence of a state income tax revenue generated by tourism represents a large section of our state budget. Everything from recreational fishing to wildlife viewing produces billions in economic activity. Attendance at regional beaches and coastal parks is in the millions each year. Clean beaches, turquoise waters, and coastal recreation are essential to Florida's economic future and these resources and their use employ almost a million Floridians.

States make choices as to how to use and manage their coastlines. Florida has historically made the decision to manage and protect our coastlines to maximize coastal development, coastal tourism, and recreational use of coastal resources. Additionally Florida has conserved and placed in public ownership large sections of the Gulf Coast of Florida, particularly in the Nature Coast, and protected coastal marshes, seagrass beds, and estuaries. These resources are critical to healthy commercial and recreational fisheries. We didn't get to be the Fishing Capitol of the World by risking our coastal wetlands, estuaries, and beaches to offshore drilling.

The routine pollution from offshore oil and gas drilling, the associated coastal infrastructure, and the potential damage to both economic and environmental resources makes drilling unacceptable off the coast of Florida.

Additionally the critical and growing training needs of the United States military off the Gulf Coast of Florida are at risk if drilling and its related infrastructure is allowed to occur off the coast of Florida. Florida is a proud leader in terms of the number of military facilities and bases in our state. As other regions have been lost to the military in terms of training areas and opportunities Florida has stepped up and major and critical training occurs off both of Florida's coasts. The safety of those being trained, and those who will eventually rely on them when they are sent into harm's way is not negotiable. Drilling poses a direct threat to this training, training that is essential to national security.

Governor Charlie Crist and the Florida Legislature need to hear the loud, clear message that we do not want oil and gas drilling and all the pollution and industrialization of our coastlines they will bring in Florida. Drilling 3-9 miles offshore? No way! Drilling in state waters is the best example of the worst idea or policy Florida has seen in a long time. What's good for campaign contributions and oil lobbyists is bad for Florida.

Respectfully Submitted,

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