

HR 319

2018

1 House Resolution

2 A resolution supporting an extension of the current
3 moratorium on drilling in the Gulf of Mexico east of
4 the Military Mission Line.

5
6 WHEREAS, the Florida Legislature represents the military
7 bases and personnel that maintain, manage, and use the Gulf of
8 Mexico Range Complex (GOMEX Range Complex) which provides for
9 the common defense of this state and the nation, and

10 WHEREAS, defense is the State of Florida's fourth largest
11 industry, accounting for more than 775,000 jobs, \$80 billion in
12 economic impact, and 65 percent of the regional economy of
13 Northwest Florida, and

14 WHEREAS, testing and training activities conducted from
15 Florida's air and sea bases are considerably dependent on
16 unconstrained access to the Eastern Gulf of Mexico airspace and
17 seaspace, and

18 WHEREAS, the GOMEX Range Complex is a unique national
19 resource, and

20 WHEREAS, the range is larger than all other training ranges
21 inside the continental United States combined, stretching from
22 the Florida Panhandle south to Key West and encompassing the
23 Eastern Gulf of Mexico, and

24 WHEREAS, surrounding the GOMEX Range Complex are numerous
25 United States Department of Defense installations, ranges, and

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26 | airspaces, which make the complex unique, and

27 | WHEREAS, originally a place to practice air-to-air
28 | engagements and air-to-surface bombing and strafing, the GOMEX
29 | Range Complex has served the nation for over 60 years, and

30 | WHEREAS, after World War II, the GOMEX Range Complex was
31 | used to test surface-to-air rockets against drones and, with the
32 | advent of fifth-generation aircraft at Tyndall and Eglin Air
33 | Force Bases, has been used extensively to test future weapons
34 | systems, and

35 | WHEREAS, the military missions require day and night access
36 | to the airspace, from the surface up to 60,000 feet, for high-
37 | speed flying and maneuvering, as well as day and night access to
38 | the seaspace, from the sea surface to the subsurface areas, for
39 | use by ships and submarines, and

40 | WHEREAS, the military uses live ammunition and missiles
41 | against remotely piloted full-scale targets and drones,
42 | resulting in large debris fields of dangerous objects, and

43 | WHEREAS, for well over a decade and through two
44 | presidential administrations, the United States Department of
45 | Defense policy has been to keep the Eastern Gulf of Mexico free
46 | from obstruction, and

47 | WHEREAS, oil exploration and offshore platforms placed in
48 | the Eastern Gulf of Mexico could jeopardize military missions
49 | and severely reduce the state's appeal in keeping military
50 | installations, and

51 WHEREAS, without access to airspace in order to test modern
52 and emerging weapons systems and train the aircrews that support
53 such systems, Florida would lose its primary reason for hosting
54 the GOMEX Range Complex, and

55 WHEREAS, the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA) of
56 2006 restricts oil and gas leasing in all areas east of the
57 Military Mission Line established at 86°41' W. longitude and
58 bans oil and gas leasing within 125 miles of the Florida
59 coastline in the Eastern Planning Area and in a portion of the
60 Central Planning Area until 2022, and

61 WHEREAS, attempts to reduce restrictions on oil and gas
62 exploration and production arose in 2013 and 2015, when the
63 members of the United States Senate and the United States House
64 of Representatives developed and introduced bills to change
65 GOMESA without addressing the military need to maintain the
66 GOMEX Range Complex, and

67 WHEREAS, in 2013, the Offshore Energy and Jobs Act was
68 introduced by United States Representative Doc Hastings of
69 Washington to propose changes in oil and gas drilling and
70 exploration locations, and

71 WHEREAS, the Offshore Energy and Jobs Act of 2015 was
72 introduced by United States Senator Bill Cassidy of Louisiana,
73 to increase oil and gas exploration and production, most notably
74 through reducing the exclusion area east of the Military Mission
75 Line from 125 miles to 50 miles offshore and through shortening

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76 | the time limit of the moratorium from 2022 to 2017, but the bill
77 | ultimately did not advance past committee, and GOMESA remained
78 | intact for the time being, and

79 | WHEREAS, the United States Secretary of Defense, the Chief
80 | of Staff of the United States Air Force, and fifteen members of
81 | the United States Congress from Florida have written letters
82 | requesting an extension to the moratorium, which is essential
83 | for developing and sustaining the military's future capabilities
84 | and for guaranteeing long-term capabilities for future test
85 | missions that may enable new technologies such as hypersonic
86 | fifth-generation fighters, advanced subsurface weapons systems,
87 | and other projects that require enlarged testing and training
88 | footprints well beyond 2022, and

89 | WHEREAS, without the certainty of an extension to the
90 | moratorium, investment in upgrades in telemetry, tracking, and
91 | other important improvements are at risk, and

92 | WHEREAS, in March 2017, twenty local county commissions,
93 | chambers of commerce, local economic development councils, and
94 | military affairs committees drafted resolutions in support of
95 | the moratorium and submitted them to the Florida Legislature,
96 | NOW, THEREFORE,

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98 | Be It Resolved by the House of Representatives of the State of
99 | Florida:

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101 That State of Florida must maintain a united front in
102 supporting an extension of the current moratorium on drilling in
103 the Gulf of Mexico east of the Military Mission Line.

104 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that to allow drilling east of the
105 Military Mission Line would mean loss of range areas and
106 possible relocation of aircraft and bases to other unrestricted
107 range areas.

108 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Florida House of
109 Representatives supports an indefinite extension of the
110 restriction, specified in the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act
111 of 2006, oil and gas leasing in all areas east of the Military
112 Mission Line established at 86°41' W. longitude and indefinite
113 extension of the Act's ban oil and gas leasing within 125 miles
114 of the Florida coastline in the Eastern Planning Area and in a
115 portion of the Central Planning Area.