

By Senator Hooper

16-02925-19

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Senate Resolution

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, surrounding the GOMEX Range Complex are numerous United States Department of Defense installations, ranges, and airspaces, which make the complex unique, and

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

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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 seospace, 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

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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
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 15 members of the
81 United States Congress from Florida have written letters
82 requesting an extension to the moratorium that is essential for
83 developing and sustaining the military's future capabilities and
84 for guaranteeing long-term capabilities for future test missions
85 that may enable new technologies such as hypersonic fifth-
86 generation fighters, advanced subsurface weapons systems, and
87 other projects that require enlarged testing and training

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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, 20 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 Senate of the State of Florida:

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

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

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