

**Testimony of Jimmy Carroll, Mayor, Isle of Palms, South Carolina**  
**U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources**  
**April 2, 2019**

Chairman Lowenthal, Ranking Member Gosar, and fellow members of the Energy and Mineral Resources Sub-Committee, thank you for allowing me this opportunity to address my concerns and opposition to offshore drilling in South Carolina, or for that matter, anywhere along the our shores. I appreciate the job you do; knowing the time I put in as a small-town mayor pales in comparison to your having to leave your homes and families to be here running our country. I thank you for your service. As for me, I have a countdown clock on my phone showing me how much time I have left before retirement.

My name is Jimmy Carroll. I am a lifelong Isle of Palms resident, and after two terms on city council, I was elected mayor. I am here to help you all understand my passion for protecting our coasts. The sea is my life and the tourism business has been my livelihood for over 41 years. The Isle of Palms is a 7 mile long barrier island about 10 miles outside Charleston. On the Isle of Palms, 1/3 of the island is owner occupied, with the other 2/3rds being either second homes or vacation rentals. Our year-round population is just under 5000 residents; however, in the summer, our numbers reach up to 35,000 visitors on a busy day. Our resident's lifestyle is subsidized by the tourism business.

I grew up swimming, surfing, fishing and boating on this beautiful island that I call my home. My youngest of 3 sons is named after one of our protected barrier islands named Capers which is within the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge which consists of over 66,000 acres and is designated as a class 1 Wilderness. I've never lived off the island and never plan to leave our island. It is our job to protect our environment, our coast, and our sea for not only now, but for generations to come. In fact, the last sentence in our city's vision statement is just that, to protect our island for future generations. It's hard to put into words how I feel every time I travel the one and a half miles across the marsh to reach our island. I immediately take in the ever-changing views of our marsh grass with its vivid greens in the summer or golden hues in the winter. These

views are breathtaking. I can smell the pluff mud and realize its richness to our ecosystems. In fact, coastal wetlands are some of the most productive ecosystems on earth and generate more than half the commercially harvested seafood in the United State. According to NOAA, our wetlands are too valuable to lose. As I drive across this stretch of causeway to our island, I can feel my blood pressure slow down as I arrive back home. I say, our island, because, the coast belongs to everyone, not just the lucky few like myself who live there. I've spoken to my state Senate before about protecting our coast, and today, I plead to you, on the national level to protect our coast.

To me, oil spills are like hurricanes, they are devastating, not just in the moment, but for years to come. I have experienced many hurricane scares, but nothing like Hurricane Hugo on September 21, 1989. It took us almost 5 years to fully recover. And as with both hurricanes and oil spills, it is not a matter of if, but a matter of when they will happen. I've researched both the environmental and economic impact of the Deepwater Horizon Spill in the spring of 2010 with its 4.9 million barrels of light crude oil leaking over time. It covered the coast from Texas to Florida. The estimated cost to the travel industry was 23 billion, BP donated 25 million to promote tourism afterwards, and spent another 100 million to compensate those out of work. This does not even take in the loss of 11 lives, many injuries and the long-term effects due to toxic exposure. Fisheries can be impacted for decades after an event. Five species of threatened endangered sea turtles live off our coasts including the loggerhead, our state reptile. Wetlands act as natural sponges, and not only do they absorb oil that would otherwise lie on the surfaces of beaches, but when a coastal wetland is damaged or degraded by oil spills, it often brings with it an erosion of natural shoreline. And then there's the increased impact a spill in the Gulf Stream would cause. With the clockwise flow of the Gulf Stream, think how far reaching oil would spread, not just along the whole East Coast, but potentially going all the way around to Europe. Spills in the heart of the Gulf Stream would move quickly making an effective cleanup nearly impossible. How does one put a value on the loss of wildlife and marine life? We can put a value on the loss of revenue to those who live along the coast but not on the environment and wildlife. Tourism is huge, the fisheries industry is huge, sport fishing is huge, eco-tourism is huge, and from these industries, like a ripple effect, it grows outward with other industries that supply everything from boats, cars, furniture, food, and just so much more.

Charleston's history dates back to 1670 and was one of the 13 original colonies. The rich history of Charleston makes it a top tourist destination. Conde' Nast has named Charleston the #1 American city to visit 8 years in a row. Southern Living has named Charleston the South's Best city 3 years in a row. According to Duane Parrish, Director of South Carolina's Parks Recreation and Tourism, tourism is a \$22.6 billion industry of which, 2/3rds comes from the coast. 1 out of every 10 jobs in South Carolina are associated with tourism. Why would we want to risk an already vibrant tourism economy?

In going back to the comparison of hurricanes and oil spills, when Hurricane Hugo hit, our town was wiped out, tourism stopped. The same would apply to an oil spill. No one will come. In fact, in 2010 after the Horizon Deepwater disaster, and for a few years after, we had an uptick of vacationers who used to go to the Gulf Coast but who were now coming to Charleston.

I've talked environmentally and economically, but let's not leave out the visual aspects. I recently took a trip to Big Bend Texas and purposely drove home along the Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama coastlines. There is a huge onshore industrial aspect to offshore drilling. For all the reasons mentioned above, especially with our vibrant tourism industry, we don't want that here. The questionable value to offshore drilling is not worth it. I have purposely left out anything to do with seismic testing and all the harm it does to marine life, because, we just don't want drilling off our coast, not even the testing for it. I am a Director of the South Carolina Beach Advocates, all of coastal South Carolina cities are represented, and no one wants offshore drilling. In fact, at last count, there were 126 municipalities that oppose offshore drilling. If you were to lay that on a map, it would basically cover the entire East Coast. Both our Republican South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster and our Attorney General Alan Wilson oppose offshore drilling. However, this is not a Republican or a Democratic issue, it is a non-partisan plea to put our environment over the greed of big oil companies who don't give a damn about our coasts.

I beg of you, our leaders, listen to your constituents, not to big oil. It must be emphasized that tourism and oil are mutually exclusive pursuits. They cannot both exist in a functioning economy. Those who claim otherwise are asked to visit Port Fourchon in Louisiana. I saw it first-hand just months ago, and the Lowcountry I call home would no longer be the same. The tourism business

we live by would be gone. The quality of life I've grown up with would be gone. The quality of life for future generations would be gone. The oil industry off the East Coast and this rich historical and environmentally sensitive coastline are not conducive to one another.

Thank you for allowing me to give you a personal background of this place I call home.

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