



Joint Governors' Letter to the Biden Administration on Prioritization of Offshore Wind Development

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington DC 20500

June 4, 2021

Dear Mr. President:

The Governors who have cosigned this letter are greatly encouraged by your Administration's recently announced commitment to developing wind energy off the coast of the United States. The expansion of the offshore wind industry creates an unprecedented opportunity for the United States to capture significant economic development activity and build equity in coastal communities while improving air quality and increasing the options for energy diversity. The importance of federal-state partnership in realizing this opportunity cannot be overstated, and we commend your Administration for the significant steps it has taken in recent weeks to address the critical areas of port infrastructure, permitting, research and development, fisheries support, and natural resource restoration and mitigation. We write both to thank you and provide recommendations to build on the significant momentum your Administration has created.

As a result of technological innovation, scale, and competition, offshore wind energy costs have fallen by more than 50% since 2016, to the benefit of both electricity users and the environment. Over the last decade, the industry has attracted world-class energy companies to develop America's offshore wind resources. As your Administration has highlighted, these companies are poised to create thousands of skilled jobs and unleash significant investment in our ports and accompanying U.S. supply chain services to build, operate, and maintain this new clean energy infrastructure. To revitalize our aging port infrastructure and deliver a new high-paying offshore wind workforce, we need continued federal leadership to prioritize the development of and provide a predictable long-term plan for the industry.

Realization of the offshore wind opportunity depends crucially on several variables, including the pace and uniformity of the federal permitting process, the degree of regional coordination among states, the

amount of available space in federal lease areas, the potential impacts on marine resources, and the availability of supporting infrastructure to deliver high-voltage power from project areas to the mainland. As such, we aim to collaborate across our states by consulting with each other on permitting challenges, natural resource consideration, identifying opportunities to coordinate schedules, and aligning construction timelines to meet states' respective clean energy targets. Doing so, we hope to utilize our joint resources to maximize the economic potential of the offshore wind industry for our country. We, the undersigned governors of Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Virginia appreciate that your Administration has prioritized the key areas below, and we offer the following strategies to support this unprecedented opportunity to build back better:

Set long term targets for Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) lease area scoping and establishment that are informed by state clean energy goals. State offshore wind procurement targets are increasing, and there is a substantial deficit in identified regional wind energy areas. As demand for federal lease areas is driven almost entirely by state-mandated power purchase needs, we recommend that your Administration establish a timeline for identifying, characterizing, and auctioning new federal lease areas that can support the states' offshore wind procurement timelines. This would serve to facilitate the critical runway necessary for states to achieve their development targets on schedule.

Supplement interstate coordination during project design and permitting processes. We commend your Administration for its impressive target to complete the review of 16 Construction and Operations Plans (COPs) by 2025, which will serve the much-needed purpose of expediting and creating a predictable pathway through the federal permitting process. To ensure a sustainable coexistence with our coastal uses and natural resources, we request additional federal consultation with the states and increased regional leadership on addressing environmental, fishing, and maritime concerns during and after construction of facilities. We seek to provide more certainty to developers across projects in addressing legitimate interests in marine resources and maritime industries that will share space with this new industry.

Consider setting long-term targets for offshore wind ports that can support the scale and timeline of state procurement targets. As recent targeted commitments by your Administration show, the offshore wind industry provides a significant opportunity to revitalize our ports, invest in manufacturing, and develop a specialized workforce. However, for states to procure, permit, and construct 30 GW of offshore wind by 2030 and for BOEM to sign off on 16 COPs in 4 years, significant port infrastructure and space will need to be added to stage and service the offshore wind projects in a very short time. We commend your Administration for making available funding opportunities through the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and the Department of Energy (DOE), and we recommend as a next step that these agencies adopt a long-term planning approach for port development that can help support clean energy needs. This way, construction bottlenecks in shared lease areas can be minimized or avoided by creating solutions that can be developed in advance of need.

Ensure adequate transmission capacity. No offshore wind project can provide power to the grid without the supporting infrastructure to transmit high-voltage electricity to the mainland. As multiple states share common Wind Energy Areas, and in some cases the same regional power

system, transmission planning and development are best organized through regional, multi-state coordination. To meet offshore wind procurement targets while minimizing cost, we urge your Administration to: 1) instruct the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to direct regional system operators to initiate policies that encourage collaboration across transmission systems and stimulate investment in the planning and development of offshore transmission as soon as possible; 2) as touched upon in your Administration’s March 31st American Jobs Plan announcement, consider modifications to federal regulatory processes that would improve access to critical USDOT corridor “rights-of-way” to support the efficient and cost-effective onshore routing of offshore wind cable infrastructure, and; 3) direct BOEM to clearly articulate the process of permitting offshore transmission infrastructure. Together, these actions would greatly assist states and the federal government in developing an optimal framework for accommodating injections of offshore wind power onto the onshore electricity system.

Provide support for other marine industries and users. To advance offshore wind energy development in an environmentally responsible way that ensures renewable energy coexists with natural resources, ocean users, and communities, including fishermen and the tribes, we urge the federal government to provide leadership on regional natural resource impact assessment and mitigation frameworks for demonstrated negative impacts on marine resources, fisheries, and local cultures. Additionally, funding and prioritization from the Administration is needed to support the monitorization of the Commerce Department’s scientific surveys that inform fisheries’ quotas and regulation (specifically those conducted by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration and the National Marine Fisheries Service), adapting precedent from other industries in the Gulf of Mexico where appropriate.

We once again express our gratitude for your commitment to offshore wind. We hope the White House considers and adopts these strategies as a priority and coordinates these efforts together with relevant federal agencies and states. To this end, we look forward to working closely with your Administration to discuss agency-specific recommendations as this industry begins taking shape so that we can maximize the local and national benefits from this unprecedented opportunity.

Sincerely,



Governor Charlie Baker, Commonwealth of Massachusetts



Governor Ned Lamont, Connecticut



Governor Janet Mills, Maine



Governor Larry Hogan, Maryland



Governor Christopher Sununu, New Hampshire



Governor Philip Murphy, New Jersey



Governor Andrew Cuomo, New York



Governor Daniel McKee, Rhode Island



Governor Ralph Northam, Virginia