



# Virginia Beach Hotel Association

May 7, 2015

**Board of Officers**

**Joseph DaBiero, President**  
*Best Western Plus Virginia Beach*

**Duane Gauthier, Vice President**  
*Commonwealth Lodging Management*

**Russell Lyons, Treasurer**  
*Coastal Hospitality Associates*

**Stacey S. Shiflet, Secretary**  
*VB Resort Hotel & Conference Center*

**Verne Burlage, Past President**  
*Burlage Management*

**Board of Directors**

**James Capps**  
*The Breakers Resort Inn*

**Michele Colson**  
*VSA Resorts*

**Sharon Fenton**  
*Newcastle Hotel*

**Christine Geist**  
*Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront*

**Rachel Inman**  
*Holiday Inn & Suites North Beach*

**Oliver Joyner**  
*The Capes Oceanfront Resort*

**Henry Richardson**  
*Econo Lodge on the Ocean*

**Mark Smith**  
*Crowne Plaza Hotel*

**Axel Suray**  
*Gold Key/PHR*

**Andrew Vakos**  
*The Oceanfront Inn*

**Executive Director**

**Diana H. Burke**

**Executive Office Manager**

**Deborah G. Buringa**

Honorable Mayor William D. Sessions  
Municipal Center  
City Hall, Building #1  
2401 Courthouse Drive  
Virginia Beach, Virginia 23456

Dear Mayor Sessions,

In recent months, the issue of offshore drilling along the coast of Virginia has come to the forefront of discussion within our community. After receiving numerous inquiries as to the VBHA's position on offshore drilling, our association educated ourselves on the pros and cons of the issue. We engaged the expertise of numerous elected officials, businessmen, lawyers, environmentalists and our own membership in pursuit of clarity on this contentious matter.

The Virginia Beach Hotel Association is tasked with supporting and advancing the local hospitality industry, as well as educating others on its incredible importance to the health of our community. With this mission in mind, our search for understanding focused chiefly on the benefit or harm that offshore drilling would pose to our hospitality community. We also weighed the effects such an industry would have on our local and state economy, as well as our environment.

On Monday, May 4, the Virginia Beach Hotel Association Board voted to oppose the pursuit of offshore drilling along the Virginia Coastline. We join in the skepticism expressed by more than forty other coastal communities from New Jersey to Florida.

Our decision was not reached lightly, as we understand the need to diversify our state's economy. Although diversification of our economy is of great importance, we cannot in good conscious support a potential industry if it in any way compromises the well-being of an already proven industry. The potential for environmental catastrophe, however slight, is far too great a liability to assume on such a beautiful asset we take for granted every day. Instead, our board is focused on promoting year-round visitation to our resort city, and supports all efforts to achieve that both successfully and safely.

While we presently stand in opposition to offshore drilling, we absolutely continue to advocate for the further research and clearer facts on the matter. Our primary cause of concern throughout our due diligence has been the lack of cohesive, substantive, and unbiased information. The facts are simply not clear on the matter. We feel it is in the best interest of all to slow down and re-examine this issue. We also hope that progress will be made in addressing the concerns of coastal communities like ours, who currently inherit much of the risk without any clear benefits. If progress can be made to address this underlying issue, as well as the ability for states and local communities to receive just compensation for this increased risk, we are more than willing to revisit our position. In the meantime, we urge any interested parties to reach out, further educate our association, and provide us with more substantive data and facts.

Sincerely,



Joseph DaBiero  
President

cc: Virginia Beach City Council  
Ruth Hodges Fraser, Virginia Beach City Clerk