



Supporters of the bill took part in the bill signing at the Rehoboth Beach Bandstand late Thursday morning.

## **NEWS:**

# **New Laws Intended to Protect Delaware's Coastal Waters, Economy**

**September 21, 2018** – Governor John Carney on Thursday signed a new law prohibiting drilling for oil and natural gas in Delaware's coastal waters.

[Senate Bill 200](#) also bars state environment officials from issuing any permits in connection with the development of offshore drilling infrastructure.

Tourism and other activities dependent on Delaware's ocean and bay shoreline reportedly contribute almost \$7 billion to state's economy.

"Offshore drilling presents a threat to the health of our coastal communities that we can't ignore," Gov. Carney said. "Thank you to members of the General Assembly for this bipartisan effort and to advocates for their tireless work to protect Delaware's coasts, environment and economy."

State Rep. Ron Gray, R-Selbyville, commented earlier this year that he decided to co-sponsor the bill based on his firsthand experience.

"Years ago, I lived in Texas, not far from the Gulf Coast," he said. "I visited the beaches in Galveston regularly and you quickly learned not to go there unless you took something to remove tar. Invariably, no matter how careful you were, you would find yourself having stepped on a tarball."

State Rep. Steve Smyk, R-Lewes-Milton, was among the broad coalition of lawmakers that backed the bill's passage in the legislature. "While I support domestic energy production, I voted in favor of this measure," he said. "Offshore drilling carries too high a risk. Delaware is nationally recognized for its coastal water quality. One accident could severely impact our environment and devastate our local tourism economy."

Rep. Smyk added that he hoped Delaware's actions would be mirrored by other East Coast states.

Senator Ernie Lopez, R-Lewes, one of the bill's prime sponsors, said the legislation was not a partisan issue, but rather a high-priority "Delaware issue."

The subject gained prominence earlier this year when the Trump administration indicated it might issue federal leases along the nation's Atlantic coastline, opening territory to oil and gas drilling that had long been off-limits.

A [companion measure](#), also signed into law Thursday, expresses the state's opposition to the 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program and directs the state Department of Justice to take "any appropriate legal steps to prevent the sale of oil and gas leases" off Delaware's coast.



**State Rep. Steve Smyk**