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# TOP STORIES



Billy Joel backed up Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo at the signing ceremony at Jones Beach Theater on Monday. ■ Video: [newsday.com/politics](http://newsday.com/politics)

## Governor signs ban on offshore drilling

BY ROBERT BRODSKY  
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Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, joined by musician Billy Joel, a Long Island native, signed legislation Monday at Jones Beach banning offshore drilling in New York's waters, a move that supporters believe will thwart the Trump administration's hopes to open the Eastern Seaboard for oil and gas exploration.

The bill, sponsored by State Sen. Todd Kaminsky (D-Long Beach) and Assemb. Steven Englebright (D-Setauket) and approved by the State Legislature in February, will prohibit state agencies from processing applications for pipelines or any other transportation and distribution services needed to facilitate offshore drilling.

"Today's bill says no how, no way are you going to drill the coast off Long Island and New York," Cuomo said at an event with elected officials from both counties at the Northwell Health at Jones Beach Theater in Wantagh. "It's not going to happen as long as we are in charge of this state."

The Interior Department an-

nounced in January 2018 that it intended to hold 47 lease sales in more than two dozen planning areas, nine of them along the Eastern Seaboard, between 2019 and 2024. The other tracts are in the Gulf of Mexico, off the coast of Alaska and off the West Coast. The department granted an exclusion prohibiting drilling off the shores of Florida, citing that state's reliance on tourism.

But newly confirmed Interior Secretary David Bernhardt told *The Wall Street Journal* last week that the department was indefinitely suspending its plan to expand offshore drilling in federal waters along the East Coast and the Arctic. Bernhardt cited a recent federal court ruling upholding a ban on drilling in Alaska and parts of the Atlantic put in place by former President Barack Obama after the Deepwater Horizon rig explosion in the Gulf of Mexico.

An Interior Department spokeswoman declined to comment on the New York bill.

Randall Luthi, president of the National Ocean Industries Association, an industry trade association, encouraged Inte-

rior to move ahead with parts of the drilling plan not affected by the court ruling. "A hard stop negates months of environmental and economic analysis that could be used to move the plan forward," Luthi said.

Kaminsky said the state legislation was necessary "to lay down a marker that we are not going to accept it off Long Island's coast."

And Cuomo warned that the Trump administration has not permanently abandoned its plan for East Coast drilling. "They are going to keep coming, one way or another," he said.

State officials said offshore drilling could cost New York nearly 320,000 jobs and billions of dollars in revenue generated through the tourism and fishing industries while putting the Atlantic seaboard at high risk to a major oil spill.

Joel, an Oyster Bay resident and close Cuomo friend who has partnered with the state on Long Island environmental issues, issued a warning directly to the Trump administration.

"I am proud to be here today to tell the people down in Washington that if they do anything to poison these waters or damage

these shores, they have another think coming," the Piano Man said.

The bill was supported by every member of Long Island's Assembly and Senate delegation with the exception of Sen. Minority Leader John Flanagan (R-East Northport). A Flanagan spokesman did not respond to a request for comment.

While the New York legislation applies to state waters, which generally halt three miles offshore, and not to federal waters, backers contend the measure will provide the state a way to slow — if not effectively block — any requests to drill in the Atlantic Ocean near New York waters. Supporters argue the move will make it difficult for energy companies to obtain permits for transmission and other operations while at the same time protecting the environment and the state's coastline.

"This is about protecting our homes, our way of life and protecting what it is we love about Long Island and that is our marine waters," said Adrienne Esposito, executive director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment.